

WILD  
GOOSE  
CHASE

\*

G. Henry  
Warren

Faber &  
Gwyer







# WILD GOOSE CHASE

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

Cobbler, Cobbler and other Stories  
etc.

# WILD GOOSE CHASE

BEING THE JOURNAL OF  
AN INTIMATE ADVENTURE  
INTO THE NEW WORLD

*By*  
C. Henry  
Warren

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DEDICATION



FOR

R O S S

IN EXILE

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C. H. W.

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# WILD GOOSE CHASE



## Chapter I

### DOWN TO THE SEA IN SHIPS

‘**A**ND to think’ Alf said ‘that I should be fool enough to give such a skulking chap the hospitality of my own roof! I see now, of course, that it was all as Lil’ planned it should be. He came whining up to me that he couldn’t get no work. So I put him up—and seeing as he was her cousin how could I do less? I gave him pocket-money. Why, I even paid for ’em to go to the pictures together. And then one day it all dawned on me sudden. I said to Lil’, “Now mind you, no more of this Don Juan business here.” But it made no difference at all. . . . Then she took to sleeping separate. Said I ground my teeth in my sleep, and it made her sick. I knew different. Yet I’d given her as good a home as any joiner’s in all Toronto; with her own banking-account—which I never questioned it; the telephone laid on; electric irons and goodness knows what else. . . . Course, I could have put a bit of lead through him;

but then there'd have been two stiffs ; and why should I swing for him ? That's the way I looked at it. Besides, I'm a peaceful fellow myself and I tried peaceful means. But it was no good. She just doted on that fool of a fellow. So I let 'em go, and they're in London now, livin' illegal. And I'm off back to Canada, to begin all over again. . . .'

It is one of the comedies of a sea-voyage that men and women, gathered in from all quarters of the globe, should become so daringly intimate. Almost any trivial circumstance will serve to introduce them ; they meet on the stairway, or they sit next to each other at meals, or they lean side by side over the railings watching some passing ship ; and before the voyage is out they are as intimately acquainted with each other's affairs as if they had been lifelong friends. Then land is sighted, addresses are exchanged, and farewells lightly passed ; they all go their separate ways ; and unless by chance one day that address turns up in some dusty corner, they never give each other a thought again.



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I suppose it is because human beings cannot bear to be alone. Wrench them out of their accustomed setting, where they are so knowledgeable and known, and they begin at once to build about themselves a new setting to replace the old. Frantically they feel out for sympathy, and are as glad of a willing ear as if it were the voice of a well-known friend.

The isolation of the sea especially will evoke this intimacy, that usually leads nowhere but to regret. I was not surprised, therefore, at Alf's confidence. His was only one of the many delicate histories that were divulged to me before many days were out. It did not seem to matter that I gave little in return: an attentive ear was all that was asked. And if some of those histories, as I look back on them now, seem humorous to me, I am still not any the less sympathetic for that. Indeed, whose domestic history, studied in a right detachment, is not humorous? And shall I think less of any man because I can smile at his foibles? He will surely smile at mine. . . .

From Southampton we had steamed out into

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the wind and rain of an early April afternoon. Until we put in at Cherbourg, that night, we were under five hundred souls aboard : a comfortable company, if only it could have remained at that number. But out of the midnight docks at Cherbourg, we watched the remainder of our company come up the gangway into the lamplight of the ship. There were about four hundred of them—a procession of weird, furtive figures herded along by abusive policemen and stewards : old men and young, with great wicker baskets slung across their shoulders, and dressed in the squat black hats and Sunday clothes of continental peasants ; women, with their faces half-hidden behind coloured head-shawls ; and sleepy children, clutching at bundles and bags, or crying in their mothers' arms. There were Finns and Swedes and Norwegians, Poles and a few from the yet disruptive centres of Europe ; men and women fleeing before the whips of poverty at home to (as they hoped) new and rosier lands of the West.

I had supposed there was nothing adventurous about crossing the Atlantic to-day, even by third

class. Thousands make the journey yearly. I had supposed that the horrors of steerage were things of the past. So I took the young clerk who sold me my ticket more or less at his word. In his amiable and obliging way he told me that the particular ship I had chosen to travel by—an eighteen-thousand-ton boat—was a marvel of modern shipping, well-appointed in every respect, fitted with all imaginable conveniences. He gave me attractive leaflets to glance through : there would be (they informed me) comfortable smoke-rooms for me to lounge in when I was sated with the prospect of the sea, a fine orchestra would play for me, there would be a reading-room with a well-stocked library, in a spacious dining-room I should enjoy delicious meals, and anything cosier than the clean little berths I should find it hard to imagine.

And so, for the privilege of travelling by that paragon of boats, I paid her company some eighteen pounds sterling, marvelling all the while that anyone, in these difficult days, could afford to be so accommodatingly cheap.

The first day out I was too engrossed in my multitudinous companions to notice just how far the reality tallied with those alluring leaflets or with the glib words of that little London clerk. For we were a mixed assembly. Exactly how many of those on board were emigrants I never knew, but they constituted a considerable proportion, including a number of 'Three Pound Families'. The grey sea and the rain and the cloud-shredded sky that was so constant in its defeat of the sun, seemed bent on giving the lie to any exuberance we showed. But indeed, it is difficult to be gay, anyhow, when the green shores of England are slowly, irrevocably receding; no matter how many kicks and cuffs a man has had of her, in that moment he cannot be unmindful of her mother-love; not until the morning, when he comes up on deck and sees a shoreless ocean, has he the heart to set his back on the dissolving wake of the ship and turn his eyes, like hers, on the West. In our voices, then, as we crowded the scanty stern, I think there was little hint of the joy of coming adventure, or of the hope

of more prosperous days, or of the promise of escape. Meanwhile, the sun dropped out of a drenching sky ; filmed the broken waters for a moment with her gold ; and disappeared from view. On watching eyes those far shores fell impalpable as shadows, yet never in all her substantiality had England been half so sadly real. . . .

We woke to a morning of sunlight. The small deck-space that had been railed off for us, though crowded so that walking was quite out of the question and men stood shoulder to shoulder, held but a minute percentage of the whole nine hundred of us. And down below the sections were like a hive of purposeless men and women and children. My own section—' E '—was two flights down, in the very bowels of the ship, as it seemed to me.

I find it hard to remember numbers, but there is now at least one number I shall find it hard to forget : ' E 16 '. Even as I write it there springs to my memory a foul and noisome darkness, loud with concertinas. And I am sure that in years to come I shall remember it,

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as other men remember the date of some great battle in which they fought ; and where they roll away their shirt to show a horrid scar, I shall hunt among my papers for a small buff-coloured card—my berthing-card. The particular berth allotted to me was underneath a flight of clattering brass-bound stairs. The berth itself was a ' foursome ', its walls were nothing but flimsily bolted shutters, and all the noises of the section (lack of room on deck forced the children to make a playground of it) were as clearly audible as if there had been no walls at all. Our standing-space in the berth was so meagre that we were compelled to rise in the morning one at a time. There was a lavatory basin, but never once during the voyage was the water laid on ; and since the basin, that emptied into a tin placed below, was used continually for purposes for which it was never intended, and since the tin was but infrequently emptied, the whole affair became most foully objectionable before we had gone very far. I think I can safely decide, after sleeping nightly with that noisome tin within a few inches of

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my nose and avoiding disaster, that I am a 'good sailor'. Nor was that tin the whole of the trouble either. My companions' underwear (they were Welshmen and slept in their pants) added something to one's discomfort. Then, too, there was of course the usual sea-smell of human vomit. Altogether, one hardly slept, but rather sank nightly into a sea of stench, where one lay drowned in a coma, until the rising-bell clanged along the alley-ways, and one rose to the surface again, with stuck lids and heavy head.

It would have been made a little more bearable if one could have washed some of the night's dope away with a morning bath; but for all of us men there were only two baths, and as you bathed, the stewards would come in and fill their swabbing-pails from your water; for there were no locks to the doors.

As far as the days were concerned, therefore, I stayed on deck all I could. I even found a fairly quiet corner, away up the stern, in the shadow of the ship's hospital; but an infectious case very soon put that comparatively cloistered

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spot out of bounds. So, remembering the smoke-rooms, the lounges, the reading-rooms I had read about in those persuasive leaflets, I took myself off to those. One cannot stand on a crowded deck all the day long. But I found the smoke-room almost as impossible as the deck, with the added discomfort of an atmosphere so thick that the billows of tea-coloured smoke lay there unmoving. The reading-room was a complete misnomer ; for no one ever read there ; not so much, I believe, because no one wanted to, as because reading was quite out of the question. Yet who shall blame the ' Dagoes ', who chose that room for their exciting games of cards ? They couldn't read the notices, and there was certainly nowhere else for them to play in ; but if you have seen ' Dagoes ' glowering and shouting over a pack of cards, you will understand why no reading was possible in the room. And all this is not to mention those stray musicians one came upon everywhere, thrumming strings and bellowing from complicated accordions ; the ship was full of music in all her quarters.



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So one was driven to make the most of the chilly nights on deck, when most of the company were abed. One forgot the throbbing of the ship's engines (they soon become as habitual as the ticking of a clock in a silent room) and standing there under the cold stars there seemed no other sound in all the world than those wailing sea-gulls that wheeled overhead ; to and fro they would fly, unseen, save when they blocked for a moment some brilliant star : like crying spirits threading the darkness of the night. And even then, on the darkened decks, the night-policemen would not let one alone, but must needs come intruding. One, for instance, gave me, quite unasked, his Golden Rule of Life.

' Meself,' he said, ' I'm sixty year. Did me time in the army. India, mostly. And, believe me, that's the life : *the* life ! Never did a day's work ; never had no need to. 'Vgot me pension, of course, but this little job sees me through, so's I don't have to spend it. It's quiet, too. Oh yes, it's dull enough, perhaps. But so's any job, 'sfar as I see things. What

say you? And, mind you, this 'ere's a cushy job, taken all round; yes, demn cushy. Y'see, I've got through sixty year without no work, and sure I'd be a fool to begin now. What say you? . . .' And just then two stewards came out and, with the policeman, retired to the engine-room, where they drank to the health of—— I don't know whose health they drank, but I saw the stars wink overhead in a most knowing way.

I have always tried most dutifully, I hope, to hold fast to an ideal of international brotherhood. But I confess that voyage came near to shaking my faith in such possibilities. I know now, of course, that most of the blame lay with the authorities; but under such trying conditions as I was experiencing, it was a little difficult not to think that the blame lay with those 'Bohunks' and 'Dagoes' themselves. Anyway I suppose, even now, that of their four hundred, not a few were representative of their countries' dregs. Both men and women hoiked and spat everywhere. They misused literally everything. Indeed, I know I should

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only be accused of being hypersensitive if I attempted to describe some of the orgies of filth that went on in the ship. Yet there was no segregation of any kind, on board. I believe (and I certainly hope) that in this respect our ship was exceptional. We slept in the same berths with 'Bohunks' and 'Dagoes,' we fed with them, we used the same toilets. (Indeed, for all the men there was only one fairly large toilet ; and though I have seen the unsanitary habits of the peasant-class in some of our European countries, I have never seen anything fouler than the misuses to which our toilet was sometimes put.)

Nevertheless, the fault was not theirs. They had one code of conduct, we another ; was it surprising if, herded together as we were, our codes clashed and gave offence ?

All things considered, there was remarkably little grumbling aboard. An occasional fling of clumsy satire seems to go a long way to soothe the savage English breast. And I came across at least one queer way of venting pent-up emotions. An unusually doleful music whined

up one evening from the dining-room. I had forgotten, since there was nothing to remind me, that it was Sunday. But there were some aboard who needed no reminder; and, like hounded zealots of another century, they had forgathered as far away as they could possibly get from the rough-and-tumble of such an idolatrous crowd. They had secured permission to hold an hymnal-hour in the dining-room. One not too particular lady picked out the tunes on the piano, whilst the rest, more or less in unison, wailed around her. 'There is a fountain filled with blood . . .' One lady there sat, at meal-times, at my table. I had listened more than once to her embittered comments on the rest of the company; and I was not a little interested now to see on what terms she hobnobbed with her Maker. Rigid she stood behind the piano, closing her grey eyes in the ecstasy of the moment. Balm, evidently, were those luscious sentiments to her. Yet I had thought she had a soul of iron: 'Yes,' my companion had added, 'and a heart of mush.' Each chose a hymn in turn. Unhesi-

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tatingly came the command of the grey-haired  
lady : Number 226 :

‘The world is very evil,  
The times are waxing late,  
Be sober and keep vigil,  
The Judge is at the Gate . . .’

With wagging finger she led that hymn of warning. Standing there she seemed like the inexorable Voice of Doom itself, gone out to proclaim the *Weltkatastrophe*. I could see America trembling, as her foot touched its shores ; I remembered the spewing, swearing men upstairs in the bar, poor Alf heading straight for perdition, and the tipling stewards ; I thought of my own precarious state—and with that Voice still vibrating in my ears slunk upstairs again.

It was a little boy who brought me to my senses : a little Swede of twelve or so, unkempt, and very frail. He stood shivering in the icy blowing passage, with his ear to a chink in the doorway that provided an emergency exit for the first-class dining-room. It was dinner-time in there, and the orchestra was playing

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popular airs. I watched the boy, with his ear screwed against the chink, and on his face an indescribable joy : he had found the only heaven that ever matters and was completely happy. . . . And passing back over the head of the stairway again, I heard the zealous ones supplicating for some ' sweet and blessed country '. And while they whined for it, a little boy in black, in a shivering alleyway upstairs, had found it already and entered into the possession of it as his due. . . . And every night, till the voyage ended, you might have seen him there, rapt and seraphically smiling.

Indeed, we were an extraordinarily assorted crowd. I used often to wonder, as the great ship ploughed on and on, how many of us were destined to find in America the Eden of our hopes ? Of those several ' Three Pound Families ', for instance, one in particular gripped my attention. The man was sallow-skinned, his black hair hung in wisps over his forehead, he looked utterly beaten. He had been a farm-hand in a remote village of East Anglia. The woman, hardly so weary-looking as her

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husband, was nevertheless prematurely aged. I never saw her free of one or more of her eight children (the eldest of whom was about twelve); and when anyone spoke to her, she replied with the saddest smile imaginable. Clearly life had gone hardly with them. One saw them constantly face to face with the ever-growing problem of how to exist—even in their little two-shilling cottage. The struggle was sapping them of all joy whatever.

And then, one day, they heard the astounding news. The Government was offering them what was virtually a free passage to Canada. All they need find was a few pounds. Out there lay the great free land waiting for them; and now they could go. It seemed too good to be true. For wasn't this a solution at last? Neither of them had any geographical sense, never having acquired one at school, and never having been beyond their nearest market-town; and so when the Government sent them glowing pamphlets they took what was told them at face value. True, before the decision was taken, the man made a trip to London for

further inquiries. And there he heard even more alluring stories, he was shown great apples and plums in spirit, he examined wheat-stalks as tall as himself, and he was assured that if he proved a good workman there was no earthly reason why he should not one day own his own broad acres. How could he *not* go after that !

Yet as I watched him and his wife and eight children, I had more than a doubt already whether everything was going to turn out for the best after all. I did not know Canada : I was going to find out for myself what it was really like. I had enough intuitive sense, however, to grasp one sure thing : here was a simple man being uprooted from the soil that had given him birth, and however meagre his mentality it least it had enjoyed those ruralities amongst which he had grown up—the church (though he seldom went to it), the village inn (though he often felt he ought to begrudge himself his evening's pint), and the sleepy highway. These he was leaving behind ; and for what ? The most ignorant Englishman



acknowledges a debt, intuitively, inarticulately, to his forbears ; and he cannot lightly forgo it. He has been nurtured, though unknowingly perhaps, in the rich tradition of his homeland ; and I will even go so far as to suggest that his debt is greater than any Finn's, or indeed any of these hardy northerners ; for they, anyhow, are vastly less sophisticated. Take the hardy women, for instance, who walked about the ship with their heads in coloured kerchiefs, and their hands folded under ancient shawls : they were surely more oblivious of, and less conditioned by, their surroundings than this East-Anglian wife ? Or the tough hoiking men, who were apparently happy in the crudest places, choosing even the stench and oily passageways for their music ; they were surely just the men to mind least (so long as they were well paid) the privations of the New World ? . . . But perhaps, after all, it was only my island self-sufficiency that allowed me to suppose these things.

Be that as it may, the Englishman's debt to his homeland is a considerable thing. No

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matter how ill she has treated him, this is something deeper than a matter of pence. Even though he come to the point of starvation, I think he ought not privily, unpreparedly, to be taken from his little village and set in the uncaring prairies. . . . Besides, I had a dark suspicion that perhaps this generous offer of the Government was not quite so disinterested as it seemed. Unemployment is a huge problem ; and when the Government can find no solution for it, what more obvious way out is there than to ship some of the surplus population overseas ? And if, at the same time, that Government can pour something into their coffers (by setting that surplus to work in the unpeopled lands where some of their capital is sunk), what more natural than that this should seem surely the inevitable way out of the difficulty too ? . . . And certainly there seemed little indication on the ship itself that those emigrants, once they had taken the plunge, were being considered as human beings ; rather, I thought them pawns already in the unsavoury game of Empire.

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With some of the foreigners I honestly believe it was a different consideration. Here, if anywhere, it seemed to me, was such a heterogeneous people as might possibly one day be moulded into a new and more homogeneous whole. Anyway, they were far more primitive in their appeal.

Take, for instance, one particular Finn : a blowsy flaxen girl, with wide eyes as blue as the midday sea on which they so often stared. She was nothing but a beautiful wild growth of the soil. Of her clothes she was completely negligent, her only ornament was a gaudy apron, and her uncovered hair was always tousled and blown. Yet what need had she of artifice to attract the men ? Where she was, they would inevitably be : leaning over the stern and joking obscenely, drinking round the bar, or playing cards down in the noisy lounge. The hungry animal in her was always unbridled, and there was always prey at hand. More than once I watched her gleaming eyes as she tittered to see the artificialities of her English sisters : ‘ Fools,’ she seemed to be thinking, ‘ this is all

you need do, or be, and the men will come tumbling round you fast enough ! . . . ' Primitive herself, what more natural setting for her than the primitive lands into which she was going ? She would be happy out there, I thought.

But for the future happiness of some of my fellow-countrymen, I felt less sure. I stifled the thought that they were going into voluntary exile. I would wait and see. . . . Indeed, for my part, what was it I expected to find in the New World that the Old could not give ? For, apart from a determination, dating back almost to childhood, to get into the heart of the Rockies, I had long insisted on harbouring a hope that in some such virgin land as Canada I might reasonably expect to find a people who, working with their hands and having joy of their work, thinking with their minds and having peace of their thoughts, had still some sort of hold-on that spiritual gaiety whose gradual but sure passing from the civilization of to-day had distressed me of late. Here, in Canada, I thought, was a young and undeveloped land ;

surely here, if anywhere to-day, I might hope to find a people enjoying a mode of life that would foster a health of mind and spirit, a harmony of hand with eye, a balance, a singleness of purpose that seems to become remoter, in England, with every passing year? I believed that health, sanity even, can only be achieved where mind and spirit, thought and intuition, work obedient to one impulse, like two horses harnessed to a single shaft. I believed that the ill-health of the world to-day, physically, mentally, spiritually, came in no small measure from the very lack of this singleness of purpose. On the one hand I had seen men so developing their minds that the degree of over-sophistication at which they had arrived was rapidly rendering them incapable any longer of either hearing or obeying 'the still small voice' of the spirit, to wit, their intuitions. On the other hand I had seen men who, in reaction from such a state of affairs, had flown to the other extreme, and were rapidly rendering themselves, in their desire to give the intuitions free play, incapable even of clear thinking. I had seen the former

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revelling in their intellectual high-jinks until they were drunk with too much thought and I was alarmed at their materialism and cynicism. I had seen the latter revelling in their 'cloud of unknowing' and I was equally alarmed at the sentimental, mushy view of life they were capable of defending. Neither way, I thought, lay any true salvation. But if I could find a land, I argued, cut more or less clear from the embarrassing materialism and over-sophistication of to-day, a land where men were turning once more to the living craft of the earth and reaping therefrom a joy in labour and a spiritual gaiety, there I should find the balance and health I was seeking. Canada, to my mind, seemed such a place. There I would find the intuitions being given freer play, yet prevented from running riot into sticky sentimentalities by the sheer hardness and dignity of labour. There I would find the way to a singleness of purpose such as I believed to be our only hope to-day, a sincerity that sprang from right living, a true way of life. . . . I had no thought of remaining in Canada : I only wished to test

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my conviction. That, in the main, was my reason for travelling as I was.

Perhaps I was asking a sincerity in everyday life that men are almost incapable of to-day. For instance, though all over the ship such intimacies as I have described in *Alf* were being exchanged every day, the knowledge of this confidence never gave one the feeling that here was a sincerely unified mass, a true community. I think the ties never went deeper than words—save, to my knowledge, once, and that had nothing to do with these intimate disclosures. We were some five or six days out from England. The imminence of land was in every one's thoughts. It had been by far the coldest day of a very cold voyage: icy air but brilliantly lit with the sun. We were down in the dining-room, enjoying a merry meal; for over enjoyable food—and the food, if nothing else, was always enjoyable—good humour always prevails. Suddenly over the hubbub of conversation, we knew that the engines had stopped. The evening meal was hastily gobbled down, and every one hurried on deck. As far as the

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eye could see there was a field of broken ice. Snow lay heaped on the wide irregular floes, flinging purple shadows across their blinding white. Their thick edges were lucent jade. And then, out of a frozen heaven, the sun fell, and lodged on the stiff horizon. It might have been a great bubble of ice and fire, bowling over the fields of ensanguined snow. And in those moments, as it dropped below the world, there was a silence far more weighted than words. The engines were still. No one spoke a word. Such a hush fell upon us all then as made us one in that supreme moment—Swede and Englander, farm-hand and criminal. In all our queer diversity we were united then ; silent witnesses, in that crushing waste of ice, of the fiery symbol of our mortality. No heart amongst us, I think, but quickened a little in rare kinship before that swift reminder. . . . Then the engines pounded slowly, hesitantly, once again ; men and women turned and spoke to each other ; there was a general move towards the hatchways ; and we were all ‘ ourselves ’ once more.

Somewhere, likely as not, amongst that crowd



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so hushed before the setting sun, stood the thief of full thirty hard-won pounds. For one of my companions had been robbed of that sum. Being a bad sailor, he had curled into his bunk the very first day, and remained below. In his discomfort he had even failed to hand his wallet over to the Purser, and one day, in the open lavatory, he was despoiled of it all. I reported the matter to the Purser for him, and he handed me over to the Sergeant of the ship's police. That extremely officious and portly officer bade me wait 'alf a mo' while he fetched his notebook and list of questions. He then came below to interrogate the owner of the lost wallet. From his little list of questions, twelve in number, and designed apparently to meet all emergencies whatsoever, he proceeded with the cross-examination, most carefully ignoring any information that didn't find a corresponding question on the infallible list. Sixteen hours after there appeared a notice, about the size of a post-card : *Lost, a Wallet*. It was written in English only. Nothing more happened, nor could I find out

from the police that any likely steps were being taken to recover the loss. Exasperated, I asked my companion's permission to speak to the Purser. The Purser was a jolly fellow indeed, short and bushy, his bright eyes rimmed with the gold of his glasses. I asked if it were possible for a more intimidating notice to be set up, and one or two other notices in German, Polish, French, etc. I wish I could convey the indignation that flared across the Interpreter's face when he was approached: 'I resent this imputation that it is always the foreigners who have stolen the money,' he said. 'I myself am a Pole. If anything is lost, it is always we who are the thieves!' I dared to remind him that, in this case any how, it appeared that only the English were suspect, since in English alone the notice had appeared.

Finding myself thus admitted to the High Places, and before a Purser with so twinkling an eye, I seized my opportunity. I spoke of the conditions below. At first the Purser pretended they could not possibly be so bad as I had painted them. 'Why,' he said, 'we

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have an inspection of the ship every morning. . . .’ Which was true. For half an hour every morning, the stewards sluiced and scrubbed and scoured. Even the toilet was presentable then : only, until the inspection was over, no one was allowed to use it ! Then, like a Gilbertian scene, began the gloved and braided procession. ‘ But ’ I remonstrated ‘ of course it’s all clean enough when you come down for the inspection ; why don’t you try a surprise visit, an hour or two before you are expected ? ’ But all the answer I got was another twinkle from those enigmatical eyes.

As for the missing notes, of course they never returned. They gave rise, however, to one more incident, at the end of the voyage. Other losses were reported : the thieves on board were busy enough. But I despised the stewards more than those thieves. For the sick there was little or no attendance from them ; there was that unemptied tin ; until I complained to the Chief Steward, even the beds in our berth were not made ; and, for the most part, they seemed as shifty a set as I had ever met

with. And yet, on the last day of the trip, though they had been as elusive as shadows all the way, they stumbled over each other in their obsequious requests for tips. That is the way of stewards, I know ; but on a ship where every one is so poor, and facing they know not what needs in the future, such grovelling is unusually despicable.

. . . The voyage drew to an end at last. For a full day we had run close enough in to land constantly to be able to descry it through the shifting fogs and mists. That stretch of coast, for instance, we learned was Labrador. Was ever anything more unlike one's mental concept of it ? True, snow lay in the crevices of the low cliffs, and as far up into the hinterland as one could see. But Labrador ? Where was that incomparable bleakness of which one had dreamed ? At the foot of the little hills were houses, neat and square : however frugally, evidently men were able to live there ; and could it be that in the brief summer-time they would be able to make themselves gardens ? Gardens in Labrador ? But that is just what

travel teaches one at every turn : the facts as one's education presents them bear very little resemblance to the facts as life presents them. It almost seems to me, as I look back over my own small experiences, that no vital purpose is served at all in stuffing a child with facts : sooner or later they will have to be thrown overboard, and a fresh cargo taken in. May it not be, after all, that the most we can hope to teach a child is a right attitude to Life and an ability to make the wisest use of his five senses ?

It was while we were still off Labrador, I think, that we were bundled off below for a medical inspection. Of course, there had been numerous previous summonses below, concerned with passports, berthing-cards, and so on ; but this, we learned, as we all tumbled pell-mell down the stairways, was to be a much more serious affair. Nurses shoo'd the women off to the right, the men off to the left. There we threaded slowly through rows of screens, many undressing as we went, into the presence of the ship's doctor. In the hushed and inar-

ticulate excitement it was difficult to discover exactly what part of one was wanted 'for inspection' behind those forbidding screens; and so, to be on the safe side, I took off nothing! Then I saw it was signs of vaccination that were being examined. That was simple, I thought: I had in my pocket a vaccination certificate, obtained a day or two before leaving England, from a medical practitioner. But the doctor was young, very young, hardly out of his training. He may have been tired at having to subject so many arms to a close scrutiny. He may have been suffering, for all I know, from nausea; for certainly the air was foul enough, from so many ungarmented and unwashed bodies. He may merely have wished to impress me. I do not know. I showed him the certificate. 'What the hell' he bawled 'is the good of a thing like that to *me*? Any fool can write on a slip of paper. Off with your clothes, my man. . . .' His braid flashed, he turned a gleamy eye on the next impostor, and somehow at that moment the Imp of Mirth goaded me into a hearty laugh. It wasn't that

## DOWN TO THE SEA IN SHIPS

this pale stripling had had the effrontery to deny the word of a fellow-member of his most eclectic profession. It was just a proper appreciation in me, I am sure, of the comedy of the situation. 'It's nothing to laugh at, I assure you,' the young man said; and then he added an invective new to my ears: 'you gawp!' he said. When he could no longer deny the betraying marks on my poor bared arm, I felt I wasn't quite playing fair with him.

. . . So, one watery sunset, we steamed down the river St. Lawrence, past little villages that looked as if they had been plucked out of sunny France and set, to their disgust, upon these wintry hills, and into Quebec at last.

Later on I was to learn how appropriate it is that the first sight to greet one on entering this gateway into Canada is the giant hotel that the C.P.R. has set towering above the river. Here the tourists are received, that they may rest awhile after the rigours of the journey; but the immigrants are bundled off into trains and hurried out of sight. The hotel, sur-

mounting the first hill, is a successful mockery of an old French château ; and down the slopes straggle a mass of indeterminate buildings. Even in summer-time I do not find Quebec a cheerful prospect ; but in winter, under an iron sky, and running with dirty snow, it is far uglier than any town set upon a hill has a right to be. Even the famed Heights of Abraham are pocked with grey blind blocks of barracks. . . . But if Quebec was not inviting to us on the evening of our arrival, much less was its appeal on the morning of our landing. We had breakfasted at six o'clock—so that there might be no doubt, I suppose, about our readiness to disembark at noon. A bitter wind blew up the river, driving thick snow before it. The wrapped and parcelled crowds below-decks waited for orders, and tied themselves into such knots of dark humanity that there was no threading them to pass from one place to another. And this lasted for five hours. The gangways and alleys seethed with exasperated people, sitting on bags, lolling against walls : until even the Sergeant of the police forgot his



book of Questions upon All and Sundry Occasions, and spoke, as it were, impromptu.

One or two of us chose rather to pace the deck above, even in that knifing wind. And towards noon the Purser sent up for the owner of the lost wallet and for me. Could it be that the thirty pounds was coming home at last? We found Mr. B. smilingly propped before his office-door. He regretted very much that nothing had happened with regard to the lost money. He hoped (and even now I cannot find it in me to suspect such innocent goodwill of irony) that we had had a pleasant voyage. But five hours of waiting—and most of it spent in a cutting wind—had, I am afraid, put me out of key with even Mr. B.'s kindly badinage. Anyhow, I unguardedly let fall the information that I was a scribbler by trade, and therefore should have a more favourable opportunity than now of telling him (and whoever else cared to read) exactly how pleasant a voyage I had had. Which was foolish of me, and unknowingly wise also; for the remark secured me a most excellent lunch! . . . Anxious for the honour

## WILD GOOSE CHASE

of his ship, the Purser changed his tactics, and begged that we would do him the honour of lunching in the saloon below. Which was foolish of *him*, though kind : since, as if in the decisive moment of our departure the trials of our trip should be emphasized, we were able to gauge at first-hand exactly how disparaging a difference in our ship lay between the first class and the third.

Soon after noon we disembarked. Since six o'clock that morning, none of us, save two, had been served with any food. It was hardly a propitious entry into the Land of the Free. We streamed up the wooden passages, and were ushered into great airless cages. There we waited until every one was assembled. There is, I suppose, a purpose in these formalities at disembarkation. I feel sure, moreover, that there are elaborate rules governing the procedure at such assemblies : but it was painfully illustrated to us, in Quebec, that chaos is the penalty of over-elaboration towards simplification. Even the officials themselves seemed so unnerved by the chaos at which they officiated

that one might easily have mistaken their indistinctness for insolence. For even immigrants are human ; and these particular ones were viciously hungry by now. Yet they confined themselves to a few angry rumblings. . . . From one cage to another we passed : until, when somehow the numbers had miraculously thinned, we found ourselves in the pews from which we were to be delivered up to the doctors. But even with the farcical examination by the doctors the waiting did not end. Though it was gone three o'clock we were by no means through with the game. Indeed, when I for one found myself outside, looking for the train that was to carry me into the heart of Canada, it was well past four. Never was a more weary crowd !

And there, bustling among that crowd, was Alf. Never have I met anyone so driven by a desire to help, and so incompetent to do so. (I had yet to learn that such was one of the commonest of American traits.) Everything, from the weight of a passing iceberg to the complicated bowels of the ship, would be

dogmatically explained by him ; and no contradictory evidences ever made him forgo his explanations. As to his flair for turning everything to melodrama, I have already illustrated that. . . . And now, being so familiar himself with the Customs, nothing would satisfy him but that he should see my luggage through for me to the train. His furious endeavours, however, separated us in the crowd, and my train steamed out of the station while (presumably) he was still hunting down some elusive official.

## Chapter II

### CHILDREN OF THE SUNSET

**F**AR more characteristic, to me, than the maple of Canada, or its blue-bird, or its prairie rose, is the bell that clangs out from the great engines of the Canadian Pacific Railway. You cannot escape it. Like that chain of bells with which the Crusaders spanned the Holy Land, from Jerusalem to the sea, it spans the whole of Canada, from Quebec to the Pacific Ocean. Across nearly three thousand miles of territory its insistent monotone rings out. You hear it breaking upon those vast wastes of Ontario, where only the trapper is truly at home. You hear it all across the prairies of Manitoba, where the doctor may well be more than a day's canter away. You hear it among the terrifying slopes of the Rocky Mountains. And you hear it beating through the burdened fruit ranches of British Columbia. It is Canada's heart-beat. Where it sounds you know there may be promise of life. . . .

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I slept little the first night out of Quebec. With such a sea-prelude still sharp in mind, I confess I felt little disposed to face the discomforts of the colonist car in which I had elected to travel. Yet there is always fellowship, to make even the most tiresome journey worth while ; and almost all my companions had been on board with me. I wondered how *they* would take this new plase of the adventure ; and I was not a little curious to know where, as the journey progressed, we should dump them for their future homes.

The car was far bigger than the carriage of an English train, and open from end to end, with wooden seats set back to back, and an alleyway clean down the centre. Since our train was a 'special', and not scheduled in the time-tables, no one could tell us just how long the journey would take ; but it would be at least four days and nights before I reached my destination. I looked round me : this, then, was to be my home ! At one end of the car was a stove where, if we chose, we might boil water and cook food, gathering our fuel by the

wayside whenever the train should pull up : a risky scrambling business, since the train was so erratic and peremptory in its movements. Then my particular car contained the News Agent's shop. (He is familiarly known as Newsy-Boy, and is usually a half-caste and a sharper.) That would be entertaining, at least, and useful ; for, besides papers and magazines, he sold bread and huge bottles of milk, tinned foods, tobacco, and muddy coffee. However, I very soon found it much more appetizing to use the ten minutes' stop that was made at intervals along the line 'for refreshment'. One clambered down from the car, joined the rush to the counter, grabbed one's sandwiches and coffee, munched them quickly, or fled with them back to the train. Such a procedure made meals a little irregular (breakfast at 5 a.m., let us say, and the next meal at 1 p.m.), but it served to stretch the legs and provide a healthy break in the monotony of the journey.

For monotony is the keynote of those first thousand miles across Canada in winter. I like trains. Sitting in your corner you can watch

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the world go by ; many an intimate incident you catch on the hop—a morning's ablutions, some birdy interlude of the woods, a back-garden siesta ; like God you can see all and say naught ; and when you will, you can shut your eyes upon it all, and still go journeying on. But you surprise no such delightful incidents on that first part of the trans-Canadian trip. The outlook in winter is enough to chill the poor immigrant from the outset. He stares out on a desolation of grey rock, of silver and yellow birch, of spruce and tamarack ; or he travels for hours past a chain of frozen lakes, like blind eyes staring up at the sky ; or he rushes through mile after mile of nothing but the charred stumps of trees, where forest-fires have swept all the life away. It is a land that, unless some new way of living be found, will never come under the taming hand of man. Only the trapper can manage there, though now and then a mine goes by, or some lumber-camp in the cold white heart of the forest. Is this the land, the intending settler asks, into which I have been beguiled ?



## CHILDREN OF THE SUNSET

. . . Most of us, I have said, were immigrants off the ship. What my own status was, I never quite found out. When you arrive in Canada (unless, of course, you are a returning Canadian) you are either an immigrant or a tourist. The officials simply refuse to recognize you as anything else. Nor (as I afterwards found out) does Canada want anything else. If you are an immigrant you are dispatched to your destination in a Colonist car : it follows, therefore, that if you travel by a Colonist car you are an immigrant !

Whatever we were, then, we set about at once accommodating ourselves to our new surroundings. Hardly had we left behind the tiny snowbound farms of Quebec, when night fell. One by one the wooden seats were pulled out and converted into beds ; men and women curled themselves up to sleep ; and one daring youth hauled down the great luggage-rack over his head, climbed up, and in the hot darkness there fell asleep. I envied him his ability to make an oblivion for himself wherever he would : I foretold for him a promising career as a settler,

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Over the sound of snoring and the roaring of the wheels, the bell of the engine clanged on. In the moonlight outside I could see the still and frozen land. We thundered on. I threw a blanket round me and tried to sleep. Soon, a heat like a furnace came up from the pipes immediately beneath me, and sweating, I threw off first my blanket, then my jersey. Every now and then some official would stalk down the aisle in the darkness, swinging a lantern in his hand.

In the morning, while still the sleepers snored, Newsy-Boy was already awake. At seven he rose, smeared a wet towel over his face to wipe the sleep out of his eyes (how bright and small and cunning they were!) and proceeded to set his shop in order. He has an assistant, his son, and a most troublesome son he is! See, now, how he sleeps on, though his father has given him a violent shake! Round his face he has wound his dirty coat. Newsy-Boy goes out to the stove to boil water for the morning coffee: when he returns he gives Jack another good shaking. Tousled and surly

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the boy gets up at last. I watch him go through the same apologetic wash as his father. It is plain he has no zest in this little game of Shop ; for when his father pushes a basket of fruit and breakfast-foods over his arm, he sets out most dreamily and discontented down the corridor. Half an hour later he returns—with nothing sold ; for, as I know, he went no farther than the next car, where he lay down and finished his rudely interrupted sleep.

Later in the morning, Newsy-Boy sends his son into the lavatory to dish up the ice-cream cornets ; for, despite the snowy landscape outside, it is hot and the sun beats fiercely on the panes. I think those ices will be late this morning. They are. And they will probably taste particularly vile. They do. But it isn't these things that are troubling Newsy-Boy who stands, with puckered brows, counting up the few dimes that have come in. He is thinking what a poverty-stricken and hard-as-nails lot these immigrants are : hardly a dollar to be made out of the whole crew ! Now

## WILD GOOSE CHASE

if only he were promoted to a Tourist train ; but he will have to wait for the summer for that glorious opportunity to join in the general orgy of fleecing. . . . No wonder, therefore, when a grey-haired old son of Lancashire strolls up in his shirt-sleeves, and leans against the seat-backs for a chat, that he is silent, even distant. The friendly Northerner had kept a shop too, a tiny sweet and tobacco shop not many miles from Wigan. All morning he had watched the dreary landscape, and it was so alien and coldly inhospitable that even he had lost something of his sunny geniality. Then, wandering down the train, he had come upon Newsy-Boy's little shop. Ah, here was something real at last, something worth while, something interesting even in this barren land ! His unshaven face beamed, he opened like a flower in that happy prospect.

Then Jack came in with a tray of cornets. ' O-ho, ice-cream, eh ? ' said the son of Lancashire. ' Why, lad, I've made tuns of that meself. Tuns ! ' But Newsy-Boy went on with his dispiriting task. ' Yes, tuns ! But listen here.

What tha want'st, lad, is fish and chips. Aye, fish and chips'ld sell just fine, I'm telling thee. . . . By gum, yes, that's what tha want'st !' But all his good words fell on barren ground, so he ambled back to his seat, to mourn, perhaps, the unprogressive ways of these foreigners, or perhaps to speculate how, after all, it might be better for him to give up the idea of farming (look at the cruel land outside !) and teach these benighted Canadians the sweet savours of fish and chips. . . .

Early in the morning of the second day we were joined by a party of Red Indians. I gained then my first sight of these pathetically outcast tribes of the West. It was at White River that they boarded the train ; they were come, I fancy, from some reservation near by and were journeying in to Fort William. All told they numbered about a dozen. The only ones amongst them who could be said to possess anything of the dignity I had associated in my mind with these children of the sun were the old man and his squaw, to whom all the rest were either children or grand-

children. Their age it was impossible to guess : from their wrinkled faces they might have been a hundred, or they might have been no more than the regulation three-score-and-ten. With their huge hawk-like noses and their earth-hued skins and their bird-bright eyes, they seemed cunning and crafty (in the sense that animals are) and learned in the lore of the wilds. But a Canadian who sat by me quickly did his best to disillusion me ; he could not find words strong enough to express his scorn of them, their secretiveness, their craftiness, their miserable decay. And that, I found, was the general attitude with the Canadians. Turning to the younger generation I could see what he meant. One of them seemed just out of adolescence. In his fervent courting he was delightfully if embarrassingly unrestrained. He ran to and from the shop, buying gifts for his lady-love ; and I noticed he borrowed the necessary cents, every time, from his ungrudging father. And so, between the titterings and the huggings, they regaled themselves with chocolate and

ginger-beer. Opposite the old man and his squaw sat two girls, both under fifteen, yet already mature women : in body, at least ; in mind they were children still.

Perhaps it was sentimental of me to read my own thoughts into their childish minds. Yet as I watched them gazing out of the windows, I wondered did it never cross their thoughts what ignominy they were suffering ? Outside lay the land that, by every right under the sun, was theirs ; they alone had made its secrets their own, were conversant with all its ways, and knew its slightest echo. But the white man had come along, as white men do, imposing his culture upon theirs, bequeathing them his worst diseases, robbing them of their birthright ; and by subtle ways in which they were all unlearned he had succeeded in relegating them to insignificant reservations, allotting them tiny portions of their own vast land, anglicizing them, and in the process wellnigh exterminating them.

Yet none of these regrets crossed their minds, I am sure, as they stared out of the windows.

For not only are they children in their habits, they are forgetful too as children are. They seem not to mind one jot the ignominy of their position : they even ape our ways with pleasure. Or certainly the younger generations do not care.

So perhaps Newsy-Boy was wiser than I was. Anyway, there was a noticeable brightening of his features the moment they arrived. I did not understand why at the time, but the reason soon became clear enough. Niggardly as immigrants might be with their cents, there was nothing niggardly—where ginger-beer and ices, chocolate and toffee were concerned—about these Reds. From White River to Fort William the shop was besieged. Even Jack was allowed to snooze in peace, for where was the need now to trapeze up and down the train after a paltry dime or two? But Newsy-Boy's master-stroke was yet to be revealed. There comes a limit, even with the Reds, to one's capacity for ginger-beer. So behold ! Newsy-Boy delved into the recesses of his shop and produced box after box of prize-



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packets. Those Indians simply couldn't resist them. Even the wizened old squaw was tempted. It didn't matter that when the packets were opened they contained no more than an unblowable whistle, an unreadable motto, or a cardboard watch. The furtive peepings and delightful anticipations were enough. Well, there is something fine about that, surely? Oh, for the brave naïveté that knows no disillusioning, but keeps its wonder sharp through every discouragement! What did it matter to those Reds that a cringing half-caste was exploiting them?—a man cunning as they were simple, and quite ignorant of all the rich lore of their kind. Wily Newsy-Boy! How he beamed and oozed! With what zest he went about his business now! The boxes are all emptied at last. And see him lean above that swaddled papoose, untie the laces that bind it in, tickle its palms, and coo before the happy mother! He is a new man.

Those Reds smelt vilely, I know; yet I was sorry when, at Fort William, they departed.

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'They had beguiled the barren hours. And they had left me with unquiet thoughts . . . thoughts that were to trouble me more than once before my pilgrimage was over. I turned to a Canadian paper that I had been reading, and strangely enough this passage occurred in it. (It was in a communication referring to some slighting article on the Reds.) 'Every one knows that the Indians have been peaceful as the sunset since 1885: the humane treatment has appealed to them, and in any case they are nature's gentlemen. . . .' From that brief glimpse of them, they certainly seemed peaceful enough, but I could not help wondering whether it was not a peace more aptly to be compared with stagnant ponds than the sunset. They are too docile now and softly acquiescent to trouble to kick against the pricks. So what a fine chance is here, then, for the intruding White to appease his conscience and boast his 'humane treatment'!

Talking later to a wise old Canadian, one of the true pioneers, a man perhaps more familiar with the ways of Indians north of British

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Columbia than anyone else, I heard more about this vexed question.

‘ I came as near to them ’ he said ‘ as I should think any man has come. Yet I never got very far with them after all. About certain things -- the core of their religion and of their culture -- they always remain silent. I was, you will remember, the first to navigate the Rockies on a raft. I was making an exhaustive study of the Mackenzie basin. I was alone with fourteen Reds. To negotiate the rapids of the Peace River with a raft, as we did, was a trying experience, and I suppose it brought us as near together as ever Red can come to White. For a time they bore with me heroically, but I know they were convinced I was mad. After the fourth wreck they mutinied. I saw their animal natures then. They were asserting their right to subdue nature in their own way, which, they were convinced, was the right way ; for how could I, an alien in those white and secret places, know the unwritten codes of the wilds up there ? It was a tussle of wills : the Red against the White ; instinct against

reason. I was as determined to conquer nature by reason as they were convinced in the rightness of instinct. And though reason won, instinct was not defeated. For twelve days I held those mutinous Reds at the point of the pistol. And, as I have said, I won through. Yet I was not as pleased with myself as you might imagine. Oh yes, it is a fine thing to know yourself so masterful that, by the strength of your will, you can hold in check fourteen brute natures, defeating them, as it were, on their own ground. But there was something else blocking the way. I knew they had been right. I knew they were really my superiors. For my code, as against theirs, was artificial. . . . Let me explain, by another incident, what I mean.

‘ When the Reds set out for their winter’s trapping, they embark upon the greatest adventure of the year. Their lives depend on the luck they meet with. Well, before they launch out upon those snowy wastes, they make a *cache*. Whatever they possess in the way of worldly goods (and are not needing,

of course, on the trek) they deposit in some safe place they have built of willow wands, protected only against the wild animals. It is an understood law amongst them that no one shall violate that *cache* : they know too well what depends upon it. . . . During the expedition of which I have already spoken, we were constantly running upon Red friends of my followers ; and usually the meeting would provide an occasion for festivities. But once, upon that trip, we came upon a family who quickly made it clear that they regarded me as an enemy. Had it not have been for the Indians who were with me, I know now that they would have killed me. When they were gone, my followers told me their story. That spring, returning from a disastrously unsuccessful trapping season, they had considerable difficulty in reaching their *cache*. In my mind I could see them groping those last few miles, thin, wasted, the papoose dying. But they came in sight of aid at last. The *cache* would set them on their feet again. But the *cache* had been violated ! And, as they soon found

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out, by a White too. Can you not see their plight? And I know how, with a native heroism quite past our comprehension, the old squaw, the one useless drag on that little family, would steal out into the snow to die. And can you see the real significance of that violation? No Red, though driven by all the fiends of starvation, would have dreamed of such an act. It takes a White, with his alien code, to do that.'

My friend grew bitter at the memory. 'No wonder they do not admit us to their innermost minds! For all their show of subservience, for all the geniality of their hospitality, no wonder they remain essentially aloof! . . .'

And that is how I see the Reds still: a dying people, yes, and dying so fast that it cannot be long now before the continent shall be rid of them altogether. Yet the few who remain keep themselves inviolate to the end, as if they were intent that their secrets should die with them. I know well enough how their Chiefs invite our dignitaries to a Pipe of Peace, how they do honour to White men in

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high places, how they will even insinuate themselves into the White man's sanctums, and how they have produced (in ' Pauline Johnson ') a poetess who writes tolerable poetry in the White man's own tongue ; but these things do not alter the case. The Reds will die out, and the deft and natural and coloured culture they have made will die with them.

. . . As for those Red Indians who left our train at Fort William, when they were gone, there was a sweeping and a clearing-up, a sprinkling of disinfectants, a throwing open of windows, and a general purging of the polluted air. When it was all over, and the train steamed out of the station, the men settled themselves for a last game of cards and the women prepared for sleep. I could not help smiling as I watched one particular family settle for the night. They were returning Canadians, bound for the coast : man and wife, and three young girls. See the elaborate preparations they make ! A couple of blankets are slung down from the luggage rack, forming an arras to screen the girls in their bed. Into this improvised

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chamber they enter and curl up on the seats : shut off from any vulgar gaze and hermetically sealed for the night. As the hours advanced it grew hot to suffocation anywhere in the train ; what it was like behind those blankets I cannot think. But Chastity must be guarded, even in Canada. . . . I thought of the open simplicity of the Reds.

At the twin towns of Fort William and Port Arthur—all smoke stacks and elevators—you play tricks with Time. But then, after three thousand miles of putting the clock back, Time is no longer a boggy to you. You feel like a new Joshua. Yet as I put my watch back to Central Time, I thought of the confusion they must suffer who live in these twin cities by the Lake Superior, for one has Central and the other Eastern Time.

If absence of rock and wasteland, and a gradual increase of fertile prairie, can be said to make a more interesting landscape, why then, from Port Arthur onward, I suppose the journey brightened up a little. There came more regular stoppings, we were able to alight at



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little prairie townships and run up Main Street for a loaf or a raisin pie, we were able to watch the first ploughings amongst the clearing snow, and often when we pulled up a bunch of 'natives'—with Stetson hats and gaudy shirts—would forgather to take stock of us. I don't think they were very impressed. Their one question was always, 'Where do you come from, kid?'—as if their only hope of us was that we might bear some savour of their old home county. And usually they just lolled against the railings, jetting spit, silently scrutinizing us.

At last came Winnipeg. It had been three days since we first stepped into the train, and I for one longed for a real sleep. I had been doped enough. The tenderfoot in me longed for a bath of hot water, and a bed of clean sheets. We had to alight at Winnipeg, anyway, so I thought I would break the journey and fortify myself against its last ardours. It was then that I really learned for the first time that I was an immigrant. Ignorant of my status, however, and with the prospect of rest and food my only thought, I gathered my baggages

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and prepared to set out for the C.P.R. hotel I knew was situated somewhere in the town. But the officials would have none of it. I was an immigrant, for was I not travelling Colonist? I tried to persuade them, on their own terms, as it were; I pointed out that I should at least spend more money with the Company by putting up at its hotel for a night than by proceeding with the journey immediately. But there was no cajoling them into sense. Clearly an immigrant can have no money, and he certainly has no right to be weary. Sternly they looked at my overgrown beard and said, 'Get along there!' True, one official did imply, with a grin, that I might be able to stop, if I liked to pay full fare instead of Colonist; but I hadn't the heart to deny him his little joke, and it seemed easier to do as I was bidden. So I entered the waiting train and once more was soon on my way west.

But back in the station I had seen something that pushed one step farther those doubts I had entertained on the ship. As we came

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down the steps from the platform into the great stone hall of the station, I saw a small crowd of what were clearly down-at-heels, out-of-works, leaning over the barrier to stare at us. The sight shocked me. They didn't seem to tally with the glowing facts as presented in the Dominion Government pamphlets. I made inquiries. Yes, they were out-of-works. Then what were they doing here? 'Lord knows,' came the reply, 'unless they want to see how many more fools there are coming out to join them in their ill-luck!' For they were a small contingent of that crowd that is constantly drifting in from the prairies to see if they cannot find something more inviting in the towns. It is all very well to insist, as one Canadian did to whom I spoke on the train, that they were the ne'er-do-wells of the land. When I came to live in a town myself, I found that they consisted of other men than only ne'er-do-wells. Unfitted for the work in the prairies (think of the plight of a Billingsgate fish-hawker—and I found one—cast out on the great prairies !)

or unable any longer to endure the ache of the loneliness there, they turn longing eyes on the towns : surely there will be something there more suitable for their needs ? And they find---nothing.

It was surely the last degree of morbid interest that had driven those few luckless ones to come and stare at us. Yet I must confess the sight had not disturbed my fellow-travellers very much. They settled down to sleep again, and the train rolled on into the night. But stops were much more frequent now. One by one we dropped passengers by the way. They scrambled along the dark alleyway, all bags and parcels and tired children, to alight and be swallowed up in the black maw of the prairie outside. The memory of some who got out next day, as we stopped at the numerous stations along the Saskatchewan line, will not leave me. The sun blazed down on the awakening earth. Sometimes, to the bare horizon, not a house or a man or a tree could be seen : nothing but dun caked earth as yet barren of any sign of the coming harvests

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of golden corn. The train would draw up at a little wooden halt, approached across the endless fields by a thin ruddy track, and not a shack near. Once, at just such a place as I have described, we put down a dowdy woman and child. She was embarrassed, as only a country woman can be, by the gaze of her fellow-travellers—to whom I had never seen her speaking all the way; and as she made her way out of the train she clumsily dragged the child along behind her. She pulled her parcels down on to the platform, no one helping her. And there was no one to meet her. Possibly she had come out to join her husband; but certainly no husband was there to greet her, no one. The train whistled, and we jolted out, leaving her standing there, everything about her pathetically 'home-made', alone on the prairie. How near, one wondered, did the prospect that presented itself to her as she stood there in the shelterless sunlight, agree with the Canada she had envisioned in her cottage among the green fields? You will say this is sentimental;

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and, anyway, perhaps the best was yet to be. Maybe . . .

Some of our number, since we had changed trains at Winnipeg, were new to me. But there was one young fellow near me now who had already interested me at a distance. Away back at the landing-port, you will remember, we had been subjected to a medical test. Roughly, the farce was something like this : one stood at the far end of a gangway waiting one's turn to go down to the doctor who stood at the other end ; the signal came : one braced one's shoulders and strode forward, one stared the good man in the eyes as brightly as one could, and then, if no delaying hand touched one on the back, one knew that one was ' passed '. I suppose, therefore, that this young fellow had satisfied the test for sanity and been pronounced a desirable intending settler. Anyhow, here he was. I tried my hardest to get into touch with him. He gave me nothing but nods and blinks and Yeas and Nays, seeming always to prefer the landscape to my conversation. I owe him no grudge

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for that, but I wanted to make him out. What was he, whence had he come? His eyes were blue, but lifeless; his mouth sagged most deplorably; his limbs hung huge and awkward out of their rather handsome tweeds; he was, I should say, about twenty-seven. Was he some younger son of a country 'gentry'? (The few words he let fall suggested it by their accent.) Had he been their despair from the cradle, fitting in nowhere with his clumsy limbs and clumsier brain? Had they been driven to pack him off to the Colonies out of the way? Well, they had certainly fitted him out magnificently enough: there were no baggages in all the car that could compare for shining newness and genuine leatherness with his, and I saw him (with envy!) shovelling into his monstrous mouth hunks of fruity Christmas cake. Or---he will forgive the dark suspicion---had he been dispatched out of the way, into the all-receiving Colonies, for some offence too unutterable in that respectable mansion where he was born?

Whether it had been impressed upon his

simple mind that on no account must he speak with anyone (lest he let slip the dreadful secret ?) until he reached that farm of a friend of a friend of a friend where he was to work out his salvation, I cannot guess ; but I was not the only one who failed to get anything from him. As it happened I could not help him ; but he might have had some valuable information, had he chosen, from the young Canadian farmer who joined us at Brandon. 'That farmer spoke right to the point, he was kindly, and he showed a generous desire to help where he could. But he seemed to expect a decent civility in return. He found out that our dumb friend was bound for a small settlement off Swift Current. Rolling a cigarette, he plied him with questions. Had he a farm to go to ? Um. Did he know the people there ? Um. What was their name ? Um. Would they be expecting him ? Um. Did he know the way ? Um. . . . 'The farmer came across to me. 'A rum chap that !' he said. 'Thought perhaps I might help him. As it happens, I live where he's going. Know every one



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there, of course. But dang me if I'll lend the sullen fool a hand now! . . .'

At the station of our friend's departure I looked out. There he stood, his shining leather bags in a bundle on the empty platform, his mouth sagging more than ever, his eyes blinking more than ever, alone and unknowing. And I watched the young Canadian farmer stride off to a waiting mare, which he mounted and rode away. I have thought of that dumb lad many a time since. But, anyway, the doctor passed him in.

Not of such as he, I hoped, were the sons of Canada made! I could not see that he would ever blossom into such a type as, for instance, that huge shaggy bear of a man who sat opposite me. He had joined the train back in Ontario, but I did not see him until we were reshuffled at Winnipeg. I first caught sight of him bunched up in a monster sheep-skin coat, asleep in the smoker. (For, although every one smoked anywhere, there was a small compartment at the end of the car allotted for that purpose.) He was a giant, and his

neck-to-heel coat made him like some woolly animal curled up in the corner. I wondered how he could wear such a load in that day-time heat. Imagine my further surprise, therefore, when he strolled up to me later, collar up, hat pulled down over his ears, shivering : ' I'm cold ! ' he said. Before long he came out with as much of his history as he wanted me to know. He had been up country with a recent gold-rush, where he had crocked. He had spent most of his days north, Alaska way : trapping first, and then mining. And if I was looking for money, that's where I'd find it. Mind you, a young chap would have to God-damn rough it, it was one hell of a time ; but what were young chaps for ? Oh yes, there was money in it sure enough ; and a go-getter like myself (I tried to look as much the hundred per cent he-male as I could) ought to buckle to, right there. He wasn't returning there himself : not yet awhile, anyway. Now he *was* down south, he'd have a go-in, look round the States a bit, and drop in on a good doctor-chap he'd been put wise to down

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Washington way, and get this almighty pain put straight.

An inopportune official came along just then, and it transpired I was alighting at Medicine Hat. The shaggy bear put a paw on my knee, most solicitously. Oh, *he* knew a top-hole place there for a shake-down; he'd see me straight; he was going to drop out there himself, to pop that old coat at a Jew-boy's before he jumped the border. *And* he wouldn't be paying the Government any head-tax, either, to get down there. No, he wasn't such a fool! Maybe I had thought of running down there myself? Because if so . . . I do not understand, even now, how I managed to escape that fellow when I got out at Medicine Hat.

. . . On the fourth day, then, freed at last of my bondage as a compulsory immigrant, I left the train. Most of my companions from the ship had already been dropped at one place or another: only a few remained, and most of those were going no farther than Calgary.

## Chapter III

### THE DANCE OF SPRING

SOMEWHERE in the back of my mind there lay a picture of a small town set in the heart of the prairies. I suppose I had fetched its foundations, anyway, from tales read in boyhood : tales of a wild woolly West. It was a collection of rough-and-tumble shacks, in all the town there wasn't a tree to shelter you from the burning sun, it abounded with noisy rum-parlours where horny old pioneers came in from the wilds to pitch their yarns over the drinks, and up and down its dusty streets cowboys rode like the wind, firing their revolvers at every corner. It was a clattering corrugated place ; and clattering corrugated people dwelt in it. In one corner of the town, of course, all the Reds lived apart, the be-feathered men for ever smoking outside the doors of their tents, whilst their squaws for ever rocked the yowling papoose inside. . . .

I will not say that, at this time of life, I

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still thought that town to be in existence ; and yet, when a friend suggested I should do some business for her at Medicine Hat, I confess the picture would dimly persist in my mind. And certainly no one, on the way out, had been able to give me a verbal picture of the place that could oust from its little niche the picture I already had. I questioned returning Canadians on the boat, and on the train I asked men who actually lived in (as I supposed) similar prairie towns ; but not one gave me a glimpse sharp-edged and real enough to do away with my preconceptions. For travelling certainly teaches this : that in the end you will have to find out everything for yourself, and so you may as well save yourself the trouble of asking questions from the very beginning. Partly it is that, even in these enlightened days, almost every one is inarticulate ; set them describing the very simplest things and they flounder as if their speech were unknown to them.

I was hardly prepared, therefore, for the sight that greeted me when I stepped out of

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• the train into the afternoon sunlight. A bevy of some half a dozen girls, arm linked in arm, paraded the platform. Their hair was marvelously marcelled; their lips were fresh from the lipsticks; their eyebrows were daringly groomed; and they walked up and down, with every possible assurance of their charms, throwing seductive glances to all the young men on board. Medicine Hat? Those girls would hardly have been met with in any equivalent-sized English town; and this was leagues out in the prairie! . . . My story-book picture fled before the sight of them, and I braced myself for a complete readjustment. Instead of slinking off to find some not too precarious lodgment in a cowboy town, I asked the nearest station official to recommend me to a decent hotel. He handed me over to the uniformed minions of the Hotel Cecil.

I doubted whether, darkly unshaven as I was, and possessed of a none too bulky baggage, the Hotel Cecil would care to receive me. It did, however, and tended me well. Yet even

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in the face of such hospitality it took me some time to feel my feet, as it were. It wasn't that, with the complete absence of rattling cowboys and pistol shots, the fun had gone out of the game : it was merely that, coming out here to a virgin land in the hopes of finding a healthy unsophistication, I thought myself justified in expecting something a little different. But here was no simplicity. The saxophone tubes in the restaurants, the melodramatic pictures in the cinemas – suggestive to the last degree, and the artificial manners of every one, were ample evidence of the lack of simplicity in the Medicine Hat mind. Replacing the clattering corrugated town of my imagination, therefore, I had to set a compact little town, gathered neatly round the river Bow, its coloured bungalows set in lawns where the water was always playing and the shrubs and the acacias gave a welcome shadow, beauty parlours at every turn (one to every hundred heads, I should guess), clean shopping-streets where cars were parked in their dozens, and complete with every kind of convenience.

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Yet behind the apparently snug propriety of the place, emphasizing (when once you had found it out) its gay and cruel superficiality, lay a tragedy. . . . In 1912 Medicine Hat, in common with many another Canadian town on the railway, had enjoyed a great boosting. Besides, natural gas had been discovered there. Realtors swarmed into the town like bees, and snatched up all the available land in and around. The old town disappeared in a night, and cosy little bungalows sprung up in a day. Both as regards the railway and the river, the place was excellently situated. The natural gas supply, that needed no unsightly chimneys nor ugly works, would not prevent the growth of a residential population; whilst it would lend a stable background of industry. The realtors could see no end to the good time coming; or, if they could, they didn't breathe a word of it to the willing folk who came streaming in to buy.

Far out beyond the limits of the town they marked out elaborate plots in the dust of the prairie: they were intent on making it blossom



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like the rose. And, on paper, it did. Customers from all over the world were beguiled into buying up the precious lots in this promising town.

It was to attend to the sale of a bundle of those lots that a friend had suggested I should drop out at Medicine Hat. Since 1912 she had done nothing but pay taxes on the lots, and she was rather tired of such a profitless enterprise. I held the plans. The whole estate was imposingly called Hyde Park. The particular lots concerned stood cheek by jowl with a school (so the plan informed me), and looking round the apparently prosperous little town I decided that the chances for a sale ought to be more than fair.

I made inquiries. A kindly bank-manager smiled indulgently on my expectations and put his car at my disposal to go out and view the lots--if we could find them. We couldn't. To begin with, all day there blew a blinding dust-storm in from the prairies. But it wasn't the dust-storm that prevented us from finding those lots. We climbed a sandy hill that rose beyond

the town and gave access to a wide tableland. About a hundred houses crested that hill, but almost every one of them was empty and dilapidated. I was informed that I could have any one of them almost rent-free, if only I could look after it. . . . But Hyde Park lay still over and beyond. Meanwhile the dust-storm increased and blew heat as well as sand. The car was stifling inside and impossible outside. We bumped over the roadless empty waste, nothing in front of us but the far horizon, nothing around us but the grey earth and scrub. The driver pulled up short. 'Well,' he said, waving a hand vaguely in front of him, 'I guess Hyde Park is somewheres here. . . .' I asked about the school. 'Oh, that,' he added, 'that kind of guff is only a ruse. To make you guys buy up the land, you know!' The sales had already dwindled in my mind to nothing. 'They're worth even less than that,' said the bank-manager later 'for you've got to keep on paying taxes for 'em. Best lose 'em . . . forget 'em! They'll never be any good.'

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It was the war that, in a great measure, was responsible for the sudden cessation of that boom. And since the war nothing approaching the old enthusiasm can be evoked in prospective buyers of Canadian land. So the town stays as it was at the top of its prosperity, still utilizing the natural gas for its few industries, and not attempting anything new. So, during the time I stayed there, for all its awakening spring greenness, Medicine Hat bore for me rather the air of decay than of promise.

And though its state of sophistication was as nothing compared with what I was to find in other Americanized towns, still it was exaggeratedly loathsome to me then, for being my first glimpse of it. I used to watch the ranching farmers come in at evening from their prairie homesteads, bringing their wives and daughters with them to a 'show'. There they would watch a cheap and melodramatic film; they would listen to jazz music, with a good oiling of saxophone; and under the stars they would bump home in a Ford. It was their

only approach to art, and cynically one thought it worse than no approach at all. . . . One had half-believed that in a new country the towns would be as vital, in their way, as the country-side itself: the nerve spots of the prairies, containing just those people and establishments necessary for the trafficking of the commodities locally produced and for the well-being of the community. There would hardly have been time, one supposed, for the growth of all those fungoids that thrive on the modern town later in its development. But Medicine Hat gave the lie to that hope.

There was an accentuated pleasure, therefore, in the rambles I had along the margin of the river Bow. Later on, I was to be more closely acquainted with the river, but at its source up in the mountains. In places, where it had worn a channel through rock and sandstone, it ran deep and swift, with high crumbling cliffs on either side. At other places small trees and grey scrub edged it and overhung its muddy banks. Spring was already puffing a

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green fire along those trees, and tiny clusters of flowers were sprouting everywhere. I clambered up the cliff-sides, among flowers I had never seen growing wild before--lupins and campanula of delicatest blue, and everywhere the tender silver-blue leaf of the sage.

One day, as I rested alone on the edge of a fairly low cliff, one of those small dramas that will reward him who quietly roves in quiet places, was enacted before me, stirring the secret wells of my happiness. The cliff dropped, not very far, to the dark swirling water, and I lay stretched along the rim of it, resting. The sun was bright and very warm, and the air tingled with the awakening spring. Suddenly, out above the water, a blue-bird flew, its pure shining plumage bright against the river below. There it swung and flirted in the sunlight, gleaming with every shift of its wings, seeming to make, with the intensity of its live blue, even more bright the air in which it moved. As I watched it hovering there, out from some cranny in the cliff-side came its mate, less blue, less vivid, and

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somehow more gentle in its flight. And then, above the water, in that scintillating air, they met and mated in the ecstatic Dance of Spring. . . .

There had been a time, and not too long since either, when to witness that sweet mating would have worked in me a delight such as only the enraptured naturalist can know. It delighted me now ; but the delight was shot through with some indefinable sense of bitterness. For (if I may be allowed a paradox) I had come to love birds and bees and flowers the better, because I preferred the fellowship of my fellows. Those tiny leafy dramas of the fields were no longer enjoyed by me at the expense of the dustier dramas of the streets. They had been put in a properer perspective. They were no longer the best of life, but an enrichment of the best of life. Their sudden shafts of beauty could illuminate life for me, but they could not interpret it for me ; and my desire was now for an interpretation of life, rather than for a refuge from its hurt in the green quiet of nature. Coming and going

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amongst my fellow-men, sharing actively and imaginatively with them their joy and sorrow, their frustration and their hope, plunging my life into the great Pool with theirs and asking no better privilege than to be journeying with them, though we knew not whither—it was these things that were now unconsciously moulding my way of life.

It was with some sense of remorse then that I found myself derogatorily comparing this little blue drama by the river with the things I had witnessed back in Medicine Hat. I had come, remember, fondly foolish enough to imagine that in a virgin land I should find a virgin people—or a people, at anyrate, simple in the main, glad in the simple healthy routine of their earthly days, content as he only can be content who finds an ample return in practising the varying craft of the fields. And here, almost at the outset, what had I found? A little community of people who, though so far removed from the complexities of our sophisticated civilization, sought with all their might to lay hold on that sophistication. And

the tragedy was that they could no more than clutch it by the fringe. Their music was typified in the saxophone, whose appeal is solely to the nerves of the solar plexus: their hold on the purging and enriching art of the drama went no farther than the crude and cloying melodrama of the films: and the willingness with which they paid tribute to the beauty parlour showed what value they set upon the purely sensuous appeal.

How should this happy mating of the blue-birds, then, not lend an edge of bitterness to my feelings? Was I to find, out here where I had imagined civilization had not had time to grow crazed, such a delight in the dramas of the fields as would suggest that they were once more proving to me an unhealthy refuge? That would be a retrogression, a falling-off in the very place where I had hoped to progress still farther? I could not admit that. With something like a mental whipping, I reminded myself that these were yet early days in which to make such sour assumptions. With a rashness that was ludicrous, I said, I was in danger



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of generalizing from a single town. And yet . . .

I returned to the station and looked out the first convenient train going west.

## Chapter IV

### THE BELLS OF HELL GO TING - A - L I N G - A - L I N G

**B**Y leaving Medicine Hat at night, I slept the Alberta prairies away, and by five in the morning was already at Calgary. Once that town was past, the mountains were soon in view. . . . Anywhere, anytime, my spirits rise at the sight of mountains. Judge my delight, then, after the stretches of flat continent through which I had passed, to come at last within sight of those snowy summits of the Rocky Mountains! I think my pleasure was considerably added to, moreover, by the thought that over the mountains and beyond lay British Columbia, already rich with the green of spring. For my eyes were weary of those dun empty spaces still littered with the melting snows of winter. I have known what it is to long for the healing sight of grass after burning days in the desert; but I think the desert is to be preferred (at the tail-end of winter, anyhow) to the prairies.

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For what are the compensations they offer for their continual monotony, as contrasted with the desert? They have not the desert's indefinable and beckoning charm; they have not its glory of purple shadows; nor have they its constant hope that ever beyond the next ridge or the next will be palm trees and a well of water. Their main lack, however, is that they have nothing wherewith to match the desert in the richness and colour of its associations. . . .

By the time we had reached Banff we were already over four thousand feet up. The snow was thick around us, and hard and glistening on the peaks. Up there, amongst those precipitous slopes and dizzying curves, you are brought more than ever to a realization of the triumph of the Canadian Pacific Railway. You may know all the truths and untruths there are to know about the story of its inception—of fortunes made by the exploitation of certain towns, of bribery, of stupendous waste, and of chicanery and trickery among certain engineers: but you have only to make that journey once

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again, from coast to coast, and as you clang across the prairies, or thread these gloomy gorges of the Rockies, clinging amazingly to the edges of cliffs and climbing to incredible places (Stephen is 5,300 feet up), and you will find yourself exclaiming afresh at the astounding miracle of it all. For miraculous it is.

The smutched story of its beginnings has been hinted too often already to need any comment here ; but there is another aspect of the C.P.R. that, it seems to me, has not yet been sufficiently stressed. Elsewhere I have compared the bell of those C.P.R. engines to the heart-beat of Canada. But may it also, and regrettably, be likened to her tocsin ? For, besides bearing into the land all her future sons, those great trains bear in also—the tourists ! And after what I have seen I am compelled to think that Canada shows as much anxiety nowadays to attract the tourist (in the west, anyway) as the colonist. The farmers might let their apples and plums rot on the trees because there was no railway near enough or because the freightage was too heavy ; but

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of what consequence is that when there is always a willing tourist-class waiting to be fleeced? What are those leagues of rich corn-bearing earth, those miles of orchards, compared to the Rocky Mountains that wait so patiently for the keen business-man to come along and show them off to the long-pocketed tourist? How thankful to a beneficent Providence Canada ought to be, that it has shown fit to throw up those gorgeous ranges in the west!

Of course Canada wants money just as certainly as she wants men; but I very much doubt whether the millions of dollars that are yearly mulcted from the American tourist do much to profit those settlers who are the backbone of Canada. . . . I have already given some idea of the manner in which those settlers are ushered into the continent: some idea of the way in which tourists are catered for may best be given by a glimpse of Lake Louise in the mountains. On my way out I did not stop there (and, anyhow, the season does not begin until July), but later on in the year I had an exceptional opportunity of viewing the

working of things there in that 'lovelier than Lucerne'.

A more beautiful spot than Lake Louise might be, if certain keen business-men had not seen fit to harness it to their purposes, I cannot imagine. I have seen little to equal it, for natural beauty, in Europe. The lake itself is set in a white cup of the hills, over 5,000 feet up; and it is pure jade, from the silt that washes into it from the near glacier. No lake could be choicer.

But the railway station is 600 feet farther down. The train pulls up before a mock chalet of brightly polished wood. The batten-  
ing process begins even as the tourists alight from the train. Uniformed niggers help them down with one hand, whilst with the other they ask an alms. From the niggers the tourists pass to the chocolate-and-gold attendants from the C.P.R. hotel up at the lake. They are conducted into the station, where they can buy tickets for the electric railway outside; for how should they walk up those 600 feet? Two electric coaches await them,

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one open, one closed, that they may take or refuse God's good mountain air. Into the coaches they are helped by the obsequious flunkys ; and, lest they should be too bored whilst the luggage is being collected, a slick attendant comes out from the buffet, seeking to sell them cups of coffee that they will never have time to drink or books of views of mountains that they will never see. A scream, and the coaches are off : marvels of comfort and brilliance, with their shining brass stays (that it would perhaps be too plebeian to compare with the gay poles of country roundabouts), their scarlet rugs, and their cushioned seats. Up the slope those coaches climb, till they draw up at the entrance to the hotel.

Does it never occur to the tourists, I wonder, how very like a prison is that Château Lake Louise ? With its hundred-eyed walls it completely blocks up the gap in the hills that leads to the lake, seeming insolently to claim the lake as the exclusive property of the C.P.R. But tourists are a blind crowd, taken in the main, and their capacity for humour is as a

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thimbleful of sea. Watch them sorting themselves out of the train ; and when, under a long wooden awning, they reach the main porch at last, see how a swarm of Japanese boys crowds round with feather dusters and flicks at their plentiful bags ! And these are the men and women who have travelled thousands of miles to see the mountains. They come---I had almost said slink--into the heart of them, and what do they see of them after all ? In a great mauve lounge they sit sipping tea ; between the gushes of their chatter they can look out on the mountains through double windows ; for, considering their immaculate clothes, is it not best to keep rough nature at a proper distance ? And how pleasant it is, when a black storm lashes the sides of the hills, and lightnings flash over the distant glacier, and rain sweeps across the ruffled lake, to view it from the safety of that mauve lounge, while the head-waiter sees to it that his harassed underlings do not neglect your dietary needs ! (It is no uncommon thing, in the hotel, for Americans to tip the head-waiter thirty and



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forty dollars, that he may reserve for them the window-seats that look out over the lake !)

My very first visit to the Château gave me some inkling of the rottenness of the place. I had come in from the wildest parts of the nearby Rockies, where I had been roughing it with an Outfit. My boots were heavy and fittingly nailed. I needed the attention of a barber. My clothes were such as mountains will make of clothes when suns have shone on them and storms rained on them and they have waded creeks and been dragged through bogs. But then, after all, mountains are mountains, and we did not carry dress-suits and trouser-presses in the folds of the teepee. I would not have gone near the hotel, but I wished to communicate with England ; and post office and bank and everything else were situated up at the hotel. There was no escape. The commissionaire seemed to have considerable doubts about letting me in ; and I am very sure it took him some time to recover from the mistake he nearly made in opening the doors for me to come out again ; fortunately

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he recovered his dignity in time to let go of the handle so that the door might swing back and bang me in the face--which must have compensated him considerably.

Ensconced in a row of shining wooden cages stood the various clerks and officials in attendance. Waiters and waitresses innumerable brushed silently past. Dozens of Japanese boys walked decoratively about, under the eyes of their captains. (It is noticeable that the C.P.R. does not eschew the cheap labour of niggers on its trains and Japanese boys in its hotels.) A collection of mortals more completely bored I have never seen than those sated tourists in the mauve lounge of the Château. Was it, one wondered, some perverted sense of duty that had brought them there? --a feeling that if they couldn't say they had seen the Canadian Rockies they might be considered outside the pale of the well informed? Or did they look so unhappy because they were just awakening to the fact that they had been ignominiously trapped and, more ignominious still, were paying extravagantly for the privilege? Or

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were those faces I saw merely the masks they always wore lest, in some unguarded moment, they should betray their fine training and break into a vulgar show of joy at the wonder of the world outside ? I give them up. 'Their dollars are so many that those same little Japanese boys will often bank bundles of twenty and even forty dollar notes at a time : tips that they have presumably received for being so efficient with the feather dusters. For all their dollars, however, they looked a miserable crew. They ate, they danced, they took walks genteelly by the paved margin of the Lake ; but couldn't they have done these things just as easily, and far less expensively to themselves and far less annoyingly to other people, at home ? No wonder they stared at me as I entered ! Possibly they had forgotten for the moment that they were even in the mountains, and resented the crude reminder I gave them ? . . . Pitiable as those tourists were, however, they were not half so pitiable as the miserable clerks and flunkys who were content to batten on them, the hangers-on, the spineless ' followers '.

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It would have been something to the good if I could have construed those titterings and guffaws that greeted my passage over the thick pile carpets and between the palms as envy : it would have been some sign of salvation in them !

I suppose that the C.P.R. could legitimately claim that for the strenuously minded strenuous amusements are provided ! Certainly climbing parties are arranged, with capable guides, ' to see that they don't miss anything ! ' as one of the staff put it to me : and Outfits leave at scheduled hours, complete with cowboys in fullest regalia, and with other cowboys waiting at scheduled places (I doubt not), with scheduled meals. Or you can order horses to be brought round to you from the stables ; again there are the bedecked cowboys ; and it is beautifully arranged that they wait for you near a brightly painted teepee, artistically reflected in the lake, and with its airway quite unbefouled with smoke. (With such opportunities, you are not worth your salt as a tourist if you do not have your photograph taken,

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posed conveniently in this back-to-nature setting.)

Were the hotel given up to the use of the aged and decrepit, I could forgive it, and be glad ; but nine out of every ten of its denizens are hale and young. They come into the mountains, clad as they go clad in Chicago or in New York City itself, just as uncomfortably, just as unsuitably ; and as a result the most they can exert themselves to accomplish, as a rule, is a crawl round the margin of the lake before every meal, ' to work up an appetite '—for all the world as if all this and cocktails were one and the same thing.

It was significant that the only music I heard in the hotel, ringing out from the expensively upholstered music-room, was Liszt's *Liebestraum*. That saccharine melody, so frilled with sparkling cadenzas, seemed to me a symbol of these flaccid people, bored and weary, artificial in mind and body too. And what a hive of purposeless industry has been built up for them there in the mountains ! The hotel holds, on an average, just over four hundred guests—

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though of course it is often expanded to hold many more ; and for those four hundred guests there are four hundred servants. For four and a half months every year Nature is put on her best behaviour, and ' shown ' to those hundreds of men and women who each day stream up to the hotel, in brass-bound electric trams, made of specially tempered steel, and worth thirty-seven thousand dollars a time. . . . ' Missing so much and so much ' . . .

Walking up to the Château one day, along the flowered and quiet tree-hung trail, I surprised a bear gallumphing along between the pines. A foaming stream pounded over the rocks by the side of the trail. Perhaps that lumpy Bruin, so clumsily limbed, yet so dexterous, had only been down to the water to drink ! Perhaps his trek had taken him near the Château and he had sensed how ill his company would be taken there ! What, bears near the Château ? Shoo !

\* \* \* \* \*

Back in the village (if such those dozen or so houses that are clustered round the station

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may be called), one saw how such a system operates on another level. Practically all the occupants of those houses, with the exception of the owner of the Mountain Inn, were employees of the Canadian Pacific. It is as if for some five or six months of the year they should come to life, having hibernated through the winter in snow-blocked houses. No wonder they hardly seemed awake now, in July! When I wound up the gramophone in the little inn, and made the dead Caruso sing *O Sole Mio* for me, his lovely voice seemed to shake out over a place of shadows, so unreal were those men and women outside.

There was poor old Willic, for instance. He was verging on eighty, and still wore an air of English rusticity. He was the odd man at the station, keeping the lawns carefully watered, looking after the supplies of ice, picking up the profuse litter of tourists, and generally making himself useful. Amongst that litter, surely, he had one day picked up a lady's crinkled blue garter; and he wore it now on his hairy arm, to keep a shirt sleeve up. Sometimes a tourist,

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more soft-hearted than the usual run of them, would hand Willie out a tot of rum, and that day would live in his mind like a new apocalypse. Brown and few as were his teeth, he always managed to hold between them a swarthy clay; and every evening he would take his walk round the purlicus of the station, sucking the clay, and lugging at the end of a lead a little fat mongrel he had dug up from somewhere and attached to his person. He had no relatives, or none that he knew of. To the superficial view he would seem content; and I suppose the Canadian Pacific might claim to have been merciful to that old man, keeping him on when he was so useless, so old! Yet it was not thus that I had imagined old men coming to their death in this Eden of the West.

Then again there was Sandy. If ever I sat out on the veranda of the inn, reading or writing under the shadow of those great white mountains, he would pass and repass a dozen times, with a grin upon his face. He had charge of the stall and the buffet in the station. It was incredible what strange things he stocked



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for sale to the tourists : rugs, leather slippers, shoes, compacts, Indian coats, medicines, books, and I know not what else. I could not have believed that even tourists would buy some of the things he had for sale, if one day, when a train stopped in the station, I had not seen a woman come running bare-headed into the buffet, to ask him if he did not ' carry ' chemises ! Sandy regretted that he didn't. Well now, that *was* a pity ! But perhaps he carried hair-brushes ? Sandy did. . . . One day, in between the coming of trains, he was talking to me over the counter. (His coffee may have been bad, but it was to be preferred to the coffee served at the inn.) He was trying to persuade me to hire one of his horses for a climb. He indicated a certain valley-way that I should find very pleasant to ride. He said, ' Perhaps you can recall a tall well-built young man that was round here the other day ? That ~~was~~ Count X. A Russian. Knows all the best people, you bet. Lives somewheres outside New York. Well, *he's* going camping up that way, next month.' I confessed I could

not see why that should be any recommendation to me. 'Oh, but he's a Russian Count, you know : well in with everybody that matters, a real toff.' I said I still did not follow : Counts, I ventured to remind Sandy, were two a penny since the war ; and, anyhow, I did not see why I should take my standards necessarily from Counts ; it was possibly very low-bred of me, but I was sorry. Whereupon Sandy, grasping my views in the matter, smiled and said, 'Well now, that's exactly what I say. Titles are a lot of humbug, aren't they ? Why, look at some of them toffs that come up to the Château : haven't got the decency they were born with ; treat you like muck, they do ! . . .' The bell of an incoming train clanged nearer as he spoke. He turned to prepare his wares enticingly. 'All the same,' he added, 'they've got the dibs. Yes, they've got the dibs !' . . . And in his way, Sandy was aspiring to become a capitalist, as much as any of them. Oil wells was the maggot in his brain. He talked you into Oil on no provocation at all. He said he had interest

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in wells that were being dug out Calgary way ; they would sure be making his fortune presently ; should he put *me* into the way of making my fortune also ? . . .

And all day and every day tourists would swing up the hill in their cars, 'doing' the mountains. Mostly, of course, they came from the States (whose very names are a symphony of sweet sounds) : Tex., N.Y., Va., Calif., Ariz., N.J., Miss., and so on. By the number of tags and emblems they had pasted over their cars, dimming the wind-screen, obliterating the windows, they could boast the States through which they had driven. They were on vacation ; they had come thousands of dusty miles ; and I used to wonder what tonic even America could produce that would serve to mend the torn nerves of him who had driven all those exhausting distances ! But Americans take their vacations seriously, taking tents with them, all manner of unlikely gear, chairs, and little shops of tinned foods trollying along behind them. They would push strained faces out to ask the way up to the lake ; and in less than

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half an hour they would be back again, rushing past with a wave of the hand, intent on seeing the next sight. When things have to be taken at such a speed, it is no wonder that such comical notices as this are found along the roads: 'Camera ready: good view, 100 yards!' All is done that can be done to speed them on their way. There is no need, for instance, for the tired tourist to clamber over inconvenient mountains if he wants to see the beautiful shaggy goats that inhabit them: by a most considerate arrangement they are driven down on to the more frequented roads (like the road to Banff) to stand forlornly there, waiting to be viewed. . . . 'Yes, they've got the dibs. . . .'

When I was at Lake Louise, a certain Pacific policeman was on constant duty at the station. What those duties were I couldn't say. Certainly he carried his gloves with grace. Anyway, he guarded the interests of the Company that employed him. And this, in one instance, at least, is how he did it. Two young men, from near by, used to come up to the station

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to meet every train, on the chance of picking up a fare. I saw them pretty constantly for over a week ; but I never saw them ride off with a fare. The policeman managed that. I watched him ; and if by any chance a tourist should seem about to call a taxi to carry him up the hill, gently, firmly, and quite politely the officer of the C.P.R. would drive him towards the electric trams. It was as though he knew that tourists have no minds of their own. There was something praiseworthy, I thought, in the zeal with which he attended to the interests of his Company. Then, from those chauffeurs themselves, I heard another motive for his constancy hinted at : could it be that he didn't consider their tip commensurate either with his dignity or with the usefulness of his co-operation ?

But all these things I did not see until I came into Lake Louise in July. When, on my way west, I passed through it in May, it had not stirred more than half-heartedly out of its winter sleep. To me at that time, Willie and Sandy, the policeman, even the Château itself,

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were as if they had never been. They and their like had not yet cauterized my joy in the glittering mountains through which I was passing. Sitting in the train, I could not take my eyes from those magnificent peaks. It still seemed wellnigh incredible to me that I should be gliding along in a train, tolerably comfortable, certainly safe, riding over what someone has aptly called the roof of the world. If I looked up, there were the finely castellated mountains, golden at morning, rosy at evening, dead white all the day, thrusting their heads into a sky specklessly blue: if I looked down there were the valleys and incredible gorges below, crammed with snow-hung pines, and threaded with pounding torrents of yellow-foaming waters. Sometimes, in order to make ascents or descents, we would curl round upon our track, until we could see the tunnel-mouth out of which long since we had immersed, still belching smoke, like the angry nostrils of some legendary dragon. When we stopped at those little halts that punctuate the line, there was always time to alight and walk up and down,

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filling our lungs with the invigorating air. And sometimes we would crawl along a dangerous ledge, and looking down into the jaws of the valley below, hear how once an engine had gone hurtling down to bury itself in the river's bed.

But at last the mountains thinned, the train came out upon the fertile valleys. By Revelstoke we were down to fifteen hundred feet. There was an appreciable change in the temperature. Now and then, as we passed some official's house by the side of the line, we could see apple-trees breaking tentatively into blossom ; there were green leaves in the woods ; and on the bank-sides I could see strange flowers, but the now hastening train would not let me focus them. We were in British Columbia.

At dusk the train drew into Sicamous. Here I must break the journey, to take the little branch-line train that would carry me down to the famous Okanagan Valley. There was nothing at Sicamous but a pleasant lake and a C.P.R. hotel, and mosquitoes in their millions. (The people thereabout have coined a vulgar

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pun on the name of the place: Sick-o'-mosquitoes, they call it.) I had no choice but to stay the night at the hotel; and indeed there had been no disquieting experience as yet to give me pause. Not all the little twanging mosquitoes that followed me as I walked round the lake that evening could spoil my ardour. Whatever lay behind, in front at least lay a green and happy richness. I had heard so much about British Columbia, so favoured, so fruitful, I wondered why so few of my companions on the ship had been coming to British Columbia. They were wiser in their choice than I had thought them.



## Chapter V

### DEAD SEA APPLES

WHERE I stayed at Vernon, that lies at the head of the Okanagan Valley, I met a staunch old farmer from Saskatoon. He owned a section there, and a very profitable one. But he was getting on in years now, and wished to give the farm over into the care of his capable son ; for a wheat ranch in summer was more than he could manage at his time of life.

‘ But I couldn’t rest idle,’ he said. ‘ I’d go clean dotty. As a matter of fact, I never intended to go in for wheat at all, when I first came out here. I’d hardly touched grain back in the Old Country ; for I’m a West Country man, you know. But somehow or other it was wheat I got shoved into, and I don’t know as I regret it now ; for with care I soon made the thing pay.

‘ That was twenty years back, a long time, and a hard time ; but on the whole a happy time, too. Anyway, once I’d paid off all

owings it was plain sailing. I brought up a big family there. And now they must take the section off my hands. I want something lighter.

‘Oh, no, I’m not going back to the Old Country. I’m going on with farming. Only, so to speak, I’m going to revert to type, and become a fruit-grower once again. Okanagan’s the valley for me, I said; and I packed my grip and stepped right in here. But I’ve found nothing to my liking yet. Hundreds of offers, yes; but a man has to go warily when he’s out for buying land down here. To-morrow I’m going up Enderby way, to look over a place I’ve been offered there.’

In the morning I saw him trundle off to the station, his coat over his arm, its astrakan collar glinting in the sunlight. And in the evening I saw him come back again, tired, and a little weary of spirit. In the hotel lounge later, with the palms over us and the spittoons clustered conveniently all about us, he told me the tale of his futile search.

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‘ It seems to be always the same. It isn’t worth a man’s while. I can see why they want to get rid of those little pleasant farms now, as eagerly as once they wanted to buy them. This Enderby place looked mighty inviting when I stepped up to it. Just the sort of thing (on paper) that I should have jumped at. I should have thought it would be ideal to spend the rest of my days in such a spot : only fifteen acres, enough for me to look after and enjoy, no soft fruit, only apples and some ground crops.

‘ Yet I wouldn’t accept that farm at half the price they wanted for it.’ And then he leaned forward, looked straight at me through his thick glasses, and slapped his fist into his palm. ‘ How *can* fruit-growing pay under such conditions ? ’ he said. ‘ Did you ever hear a more tragic tale of mismanagement than the history of these fruit-growers provides ? ’

I asked for some explanation. What exactly was the tragic tale that the history of these fruit-growers provided ? The old farmer fumbled in his pockets, and presently produced

some grimy pamphlets. He smoothed them out slowly, then said :

‘ To begin with, there’s something drastically wrong, to my way of thinking, in the way intending settlers are beguiled into coming out here. They are only told one side of the case.’ He pointed to the pamphlets on his knee. ‘ A young fellow I met the other day gave me these. They are pamphlets issued by the Dominion Government to entice Englishmen to come out to Canada. I tell you that young man was properly riled. He said he’d come out here believing the facts put forward in those papers represented the truth. Oh, so they do, but not the whole truth.

‘ For instance, they make it quite clear to you, that if they assist you to a farm, you will have to make repayment in twenty-five equal annual instalments, at an interest of five per cent. per annum. Well, if Canada were as her propagandists paint her to be, no one could complain that such terms were unfair. But what these papers do not point out is that, since the first instalment is due at the end of the

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second season, a family will scarcely have begun to see its way after two hard years of clearing, ploughing and planting, when the first small returns will be swamped up in taxes.

‘And look,’ the old man went on, ‘it says here that “no family will be placed in an unsettled or in an entirely new and pioneer district”. Good, but it doesn’t warn the young greenhorns that out here, as elsewhere, competition rules the day, so that if a family is “given” a farm too far from a railroad they might as well quit it at once. I suppose they are expected to know all that, eh?’

‘You will say this hasn’t very much to do with British Columbia. It has, as you’ll quickly find out, if you talk to many of the small farmers down the valleys here. What is the good of the farmers here being able to grow apples as big as pumpkins, if they’re going to rot on the trees because it isn’t worth while to pick them—since over the border, in Washington and in California, the fruit is just as good, the fruitage and tariff more reasonable, and

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the farmers better organized to meet the demands of a market that must necessarily be, for the most part, more than an ocean away? 'That's something these pamphlets don't point out.'

The farmer spoke bitterly. 'Here are dozens of extracts from letters of men who have had varying degrees of success. I've been successful too, and for myself I've nothing to complain of; but it goes against the grain to see men coming out here almost under false pretences. And it doesn't do Canada any good either, in the long run. Far better tell them the whole truth. Far better print some of the letters of "Knockers" too, as we call our detrimental critics, and let the men read both sides of the case, before they throw up everything and come out here. I'd like to see them print a letter, let us say, from that young Enderby farmer I've just been out to visit. He'd tell them how because of the lack of transportation, and because of the high freightage, and because of the competition with the various combines round about, he was obliged last year to leave

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some two-thirds of his apples rotting on the trees. And no wonder !'

A few days later that disillusioned farmer went home to Saskatoon, his dream of a happy farm in the Okanagan dispelled like smoke before the wind.

Yet as I had come down from Sicamous to Vernon, I might have been looking through the carriage windows, on the actual embodiment of some Utopian dream. Once past the margins of the Lake Mara, the valley became dotted with small farms, usually not more than about ten to fifteen acres, and often not yet all<sup>2</sup> cleared, where out of the rich black earth young trees were sprouting and already breaking into blossom. Here at last, I had said, was surely the kind of thing I had been hoping to find. No breaking of dreams here, in *this* fertile valley ! The farms were small but sufficient to make the quiet neighbourhood self-supporting, the houses were put together out of wood felled in the clearing of the land, there was an air of simple contentment over all. In such a prospect I could afford to forget Medicine

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Hat and all its imported artificialities. Here, I said, I would find at last a folk who knew how to live in a wise and happy frugality. Here I would find the true simplicity that only comes of a balance of heart and mind. And though I had already been put sufficiently on my guard not to trust too implicitly in the railway-window view of men and things, still I clung to my high expectations. Until I met the farmer from Saskatoon !

Vernon itself lies at the northern end of the twisting snake-like lake that has given its name to one of the most luxurious stretches of land in all Canada. The hills rise on either side of that lake, thinly treed and hardly covered with grass. And it is mainly between those hills that the tributary valleys branch out, so thick with the orchards that have made Okanagan famous. Being then, as it were, the northern gateway of the valley, it is the chief collecting station for the fruit, and the head-quarters of one of the chief fruit-growers' associations in the district. It was still only May, and the long leagues of apple-trees were as white with



blossom as those recent peaks had been with snow ; and yet already the little town was placarded, at every turn, with prominent notices welcoming the tourist into Vernon. Everywhere I heard expression given to the hope that this would prove a bumper year ; and it was not apples the speakers were thinking of, so much as dollars out of the pockets of tourists.

Indeed, you cannot go into a barber's shop and sit down for a shave, but before the first crop is off you are being offered a fruit farm near by, well stocked with the best apple-trees, bearing just the particular kind for which the markets of to-day are clamouring, and for an exceptionally low figure ! So I guessed that every year greenhorns like myself must come into Okanagan, expecting to find there something of the ideal state I myself had hoped to find. And I wondered how many of them, beguiled by those 'very exceptionally low figures', had purchased one or other of the little well-stocked farms in the valleys round about ?

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I looked along the fertile valleys so heavy with the promise of fruit, richly watered from the melting snows above, warmed by a most considerate sun. I remembered all the tall bottles of apples and plums that I had seen, preserved in spirits, wherever the propagandist flaunts his trade. Well, on the surface, I knew that those things represented the truth ; for, if anywhere, here such wondrous fruit would surely grow. Yet the essential truth hides underneath these things, and is not told to the would-be buyer or settler.

Down the valley, I saw numerous instances of ex-officers who had spent the whole of their gratuity in coming out here to what they had imagined would be the greenest escape possible from memories of the war they had come through. They bought up small farms, sunk their money in them, and slaved through the first few years to get things shipshape, only to find in the end that the rich fruit they had coaxed out of the land apparently wasn't wanted !

One of the fairest of all those tributary

valleys is the Coldstream Valley. Leaving the little coloured leafy town of Vernon behind me, I turned up a road bordered on either side with thickly blossomed trees. The bloom was rasting ever so little, yet even so I had never seen anything so prodigal in all the orchards of Kent or Worcestershire. Out of the spring sky the sun shone warmly down. Here was a good land indeed, and, strange enough, a profitable one, too. For here, in contrast to most of the valleys in this neighbourhood, the best miles belong to a company, rich enough in capital to defy the hundred and one inconveniences and mismanagements that harass the small man, strong enough to be almost its own dictator. Is this, then, to be the end of Okanagan—if it wishes to continue as a fruit-growing centre: to be bought up and run by combines? Or is to be 'opened up' still further as a tourist resort? (And with a lake as beautiful as Okanagan is, and such a fair climate as it possesses, this latter course would be easily practicable.) And which is better? As for the possibility of Okanagan

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ever developing now into such a valley of happy men as I had imagined it might be, that is out of the question. Here was everything that might have made such a community possible: sun and rain have made the land drop with fatness. But it almost seems as if there is no place in the world to-day for the 'small man', and to dream of a Utopia of earth workers is but a waste of time. The way of life has been standardized for all men, like everything else; and if a man have the effrontery to prefer to pick his own way, he is quickly made to feel the power of the combine. And so for Okanagan the great opportunity has gone by. . . .

Where the railway ends, at Okanagan Landing, a Canadian Pacific steamship service takes the passengers down to Penticton, on the Kettle Valley line that runs west to Vancouver. Three hours, and you are at Kelowna, on the eastern bank of the Lake. But there was nothing to be gained by stopping in Kelowna; it is far more flagrantly a tourist resort than ever Vernon was. So I decided to trek one of the small

valleys leading away from the town, up to Rutland and beyond ; there I would find a farmer to whom I had an introduction. Rutland itself lies no more than five miles out, in the heart of the fruit-growing region, and close up under the lee of the hills. But for all the favourable situation of the place, Mr. Zed's story was but another version of those I had already heard. With his wife and two children he lived on a farm that, to judge by his words, must have been a constant millstone about his neck. Could he have found any reasonable means of quitting it, he said he would have left the place to-morrow. The fruit, fine as it was, simply could not pay under existing conditions. Like many another farmer in the neighbourhood, he had been compelled to take in a Japanese on what was politely but inaccurately termed ' half-shares ' : that is to say, whilst he continued to look after the fruit trees the Japanese attended to the irrigation and grew crops of onions, tomatoes, etc., underneath. And it is instructive to notice, by the way, how these Japanese go on quietly making a ' corner ' in small things

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in British Columbia. What the Englishman fails at (from one reason and another) the Japanese, frugal and industrious as they are, turn to their advantage. Perhaps it is a realization of what this means that is causing the Dominion Government to make it an increasing difficulty for these persevering Easterners to get a foot in the land!

Other excursions, other inquiries, only led to the same conclusion: the Okanagan Valley, as far as its being a happy hunting-ground for the small fruit-grower is concerned, is a failure. Partly this is due to an entire lack of proper co-operation between the Government, the Railway, and the Farmers' Associations, and partly to an essential incapacity in the men themselves to play the part, at this stage of our civilization, of the small self-supporting farmer. . . .

One incident, however, remains in my mind, pointing a moral to my endeavours in the Okanagan. One morning I took the creeking ferry and crossed to the western bank of the lake. Some way behind West Bank lay an

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Indian Reservation. I climbed the hill-side, through meadows thick with spring flowers of every kind. To lie on that hill-side, in odorous bushes of thyme and lavender, with lupins in blue spires all about one, and wild canaries and blue-birds and Oregon thrushes flashing through the air, was but to see with sharper edge the tragedy of the valleys that beyond, over the water. Could it be, I asked myself, that I was on some wild goose chase after all? Was it futile in me to expect, at this end of civilization, to find men<sup>men</sup>able to live in a simple harmony? Was our civilization so far gone to day that a change of heart in that direction was impossible? Had the brand of Moloch been stamped even on the virgin soil of the world already?

I walked on, over the hill and into the valleys beyond. Solitary in the fields there, I saw an Indian at plough. I watched him striding up and down, up and down, while the the sunlight gleamed on his sweating furrows. I waited until he came to a halt at the rim of his field, and then strode up to talk with him. It was

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a long time before I could feel that he was speaking sincerely ; as I was one of the ' conquering Whites ' he probably judged it best to say those things that he thought were expected of him.

' Oh yes-a, me like the little place here very much ; me work-a down in Kelowna many years for White-a man, and vera good master, too. And now me back in the Reserve again, ploughing my own bit of land. . . . '

He spoke as if he were thanking the good White man for his kindness in allowing him to till these few acres.

But as we continued talking, the mask fell off at last, and for the moment I saw the real man, a tiny branch of that great Red tree that had once been rooted all over the land. 'The valley was a very dry one in summer, and since the hot weather had set in so early this year, he was wondering whether he was going to experience a repetition of last year's drought. He feared he might. And then came the story of how his White man neighbour-farmer, whose wide farm reached down to his own few acres,



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had so effectually monopolized the water supply that the Red man's land had been starved into sterility. The apples had dropped from the trees unformed, nothing would grow in the soil beneath them, and there had been no fodder for his poor old horse. 'But White man up there-a, him plenty apples, and onions. Oh yes-a. . . .' It was the story of the violated *cache* all over again. Is that, then, how the White man has triumphed? Is he sometimes so blind in his greed that he cannot now recognize even the simplest laws of fellowship? No wonder the civilization he has founded bears such bitter fruit if its roots work in such sour soil! Better by far be a Red, wresting a few good grains from the summer earth, trapping beasts through an unkindly winter, nomadic to the end, than master of these leagues of sturdy apple-trees, if you can make them yield you nothing better than Dead Sea Apples. . . .

## Chapter VI

### ENSLAVED DEMOCRACY

**M**Y landlady in Vancouver spent most of her day in trying to catch up with time she had lost. She would slither round the house all the morning, her hair flopping down her neck, her stockings dangling round her heels. If the telephone bell rang, she would chide it and let it ring on. 'Oh dear!' were the words most constantly upon her lips, and she wore a harassed expression that suggested all the ends of the earth were crowding in on that one small head.

As a matter of fact it wasn't the ends of the earth at all that were worrying her: it was all the stars above. For she took an interest in astrology. She first told me of her little failing one morning as she trundled the vacuum cleaner to and fro over my floor. The house smelt vilely of cats, always did. I was trying to brace myself to approach the subject, when there came a knock at the door. It was a 'Chink' with the washing. As Mrs. Morgan

handed me the parcel, she looked down at the writing on the wrapper, and said, 'Now, that's lovely, isn't it? I don't know what it means, I'm sure. But it's lovely enough to mean anything.' A beautiful script that signified no more, I dare say, than the nature of my underwear, or my name, adorned one corner of the cover.

'You see,' continued Mrs. Morgan, 'those Chinks have got plenty of time. Plenty of time. I've never seen them flurried yet. Now, if only *we* could attain something of their poise! Yes, that's what we want: poise.' She lingered on the word, seemed to be looking approvingly at it in mid-air, and then turned her watery blue eyes towards me. 'Poise!' she murmured. How could I approach the subject of cats then? Mrs. Morgan slummocked out of the room.

Often in the evenings, letting the work look after itself, she would sit in darkness in the only room that wasn't shrouded by the veranda, communing with the stars through the open window. At other times, she sat there

'reading them up'. I used to breakfast in that room, and I could not resist turning over her books. But they were beyond me completely. Mrs. Morgan had a desire, I know, to cast my horoscope. She even attempted to control my comings and goings by the stars. One day, as I was speaking over the 'phone about some engagement I had to fulfil, she broke in with, 'Oh no, I shouldn't; there isn't an auspicious planet in all the heavens to-night, not one; you'd far better wait. . . .'

As the day shut at last, it was always the same cry with Mrs. Morgan, 'Oh, and I *meant* to - - !' But sometimes she would remember, and then she would act with a suddenness and violence that more often brought ill than good. Perhaps it was her drooping flowers that she suddenly remembered, or the harm of the drought to her grass. Then she would rush out and seize the hose, turn the water full on and discharge it wildly over the starving flowers. Or, even as she watered them, she would remember the dirty windows; and, without troubling to see if they were shut,

she would shoot a deluge of water through them, till it soaked me where I sat writing. Such were poor Mrs. Morgan's attempts at 'poise'!

She gave astrological tea-parties, too. But what happened on those cloistered occasions there was no knowing; for she kept the door shut fast: so fast, in fact, that, in common with the rest of her lodgers, I used to give up any expectation of a meal that night, and go out to dine. . . .

Acquaintance with Mrs. Morgan, therefore, somewhat cut short my surprise when I saw how prolific Vancouver was in astrologists' consulting rooms and palmists' parlours. One short street I found almost given over to the latter. The trellised porches were plastered over with notices reading like this: 'Come and tell me all your family troubles, and all your affairs of the heart: I will heal them all!' Whilst I heard of one lady palmist who was so much sought after that to obtain access to her parlour you must needs book an engagement days beforehand. Like Mrs. Morgan,

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apparently, all the ladies of Vancouver were emulating that enviable 'poise' of the Chinks.

And indeed, with all the time they seem to have on their hands, it is strange they do not attain it. Yet however hard they try, and by whatever means, they do not seem successful in their attempt. Some, like Madame Blanc, for instance, pursue their search in horticultural study. Madame Blanc had married a French Canadian. She was, whether you surprised her at work in the garden or lounging in the house, all ear-rings and glitter. A widow, she had been left immensely rich. She had just returned from a little trip to Florida, for she couldn't keep away from her garden long. She had been run down: the doctor had said it must be England; but Madame Blanc had said, 'Never again!'

'You see, I knew what that would mean,' she said. 'Six days out of the seven I'd spend down in my bunk, sick as a dog.' (Madame was always a little crude in her speech; and, besides, dogs, as you shall hear, shared with the garden her ample affection.) 'But you get

the doctor's point? He knows what a lover of my home I am, and he thought that once I was across the Atlantic, the mere thought of the return voyage would keep me there long enough to get well.' Madame shook her tremendous ear-rings and giggled. 'But I was one too many for him.

'Why, the mere remembrance of my last, and only, trip to England makes me retch. I buy most of my Poms there, you know. And I used to buy them without seeing 'em. But I'm not buying any more like that. No, for they soaked me terrible, I tell you. Terrible! That was how I came to cross the Atlantic at all. I was after some fresh stock. Well, I bought five of the best Poms you'd ever set eyes on. One hundred and fifty pounds they cost me, too. Coming home, of course I went below second day. (Oh, the cruel agony of it!) The butcher looked after those Poms for me. And, believe me, one day he came down to my bunk and he said, "Madame, two of them dogs has diarrhœa." Weak as I was, I jumped up in bed and "'Oly Moses!" I

said, "after the way I've tipped you, do you mean to say you've gone and let those dogs get diarrhœa?" I *was* in a state, you bet. And all those dogs died, the dears! All but one.'

'Dogs want proper attention,' she continued. Once she started talking about dogs or flowers, there was no use trying to stop her. 'Yes, proper attention like we do. Why, I feed mine, as you see, off trays, a piece of meat here and a piece there. That tempts 'em, and yet they can't eat too much. I try to do everything for them myself. I even operate on them myself. It *was* queer the way I came to pluck up enough courage to operate on animals the first time. For I was that timid always. You see, I once had a crop-bound hen. I said to myself, "May, don't be a fool, there's no need for a vet., you could put that hen to rights in no time if you liked." So I went in and fetched needle and thread. I took that old hen and laid her out on the potting-shed bench. I pulled her feathers out---trembling all the while, I was that excited. And, hardly knowing what I was doing, I cut her and stitched her



up again. Then I took her and laid her by the stove. I was so all up in the air at what I'd done that I flew to the 'phone and told my sister. And do you know, when I came back, that hen had laid an egg. . . .'

For everything Madame Blanc had only one standard : it must be biggest, best, or most ; or she didn't want to see it. And she had enough money to gratify her vulgarity. Her garden was a riot of Canterbury bells as big as saucers ; she had roses coming along that would be the best in the whole continent ; and, look ! those gladiolas cost five dollars a bulb.

Yet none of these things brought Madame any spiritual consolation ; they were but so many more aids to aggrandizement--like the huge jewels that dragged down the lobes of her ears or half covered her fat fingers. And they all left her quite barren of any real joy.

Then there were even some who pursued their search for ' poise ' in the realms of music. . . . In a delightful house in one of the choicest quarters of the town I was invited to a ' musical

evening'. 'There sat the young ladies, 'so musical, you know', trying their best to look as if playing the piano (as they knew was expected of them) were the last thought they entertained. 'There sat the fond mother. And on a sofa over in one corner sat two stout ladies comparing notes on 'Frisco. The men sat mum and waiting.

'Oh, but 'Frisco's just the very darlindest place I know,' said the lady in damson silk: 'so—so—so alive, isn't it, my dear?'

Said the hostess, 'Now, won't you please sing us that new song you've just written, Mabel?'

'... And then I found them all so keen on the Arts down there; you'd never believe how keen they are in 'Frisco: no end keen.'

'Oh, but it's just too bad of you,' Mabel simpered, 'making me cry my own wares, as it were!' She was a little confused. 'Very well then, since you will!' (Turning to the company): 'It's just a little thing I worked out the other day: words by Kipling.' She sat down and sang, over a meandering octave bass.

'Still, for all that, I think Los Angeles has my real heart,' said the damson lady, between the verses.

'But then the Eats are so jolly in 'Frisco: that's what I like about it. . . .'

Mabel was performing a second solo: a piece by Rachmaninof this time. Half-way through she floundered and failed.

'If you'd only practise more, Mabel,' said her irate mother, 'and give over working out those songs, perhaps you'd do better. Goodness knows, enough was spent on your musical education. . . . !'

'But sure I'll be tickled to death to get back to me father's oilfields,' a young American was saying elsewhere in the room; 'Yeah, it's *erfume* to me, is the smell of oil. . . .'

Mabel was still a little flushed and confused, from her mother's rebuke. And then a middle-aged lady floated silverly across the room to her and said, 'My dear, I'd so adore you to set a little poem of my own: *Bedtime*, it's called. . . .'

Vancouver, in short, is suburbia in excelsis!

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'That was a revealing remark one enthusiastic denizen of the city let fall, when she said, 'I don't know any other town where, being so poor, you can have such a heck of a time.' And by 'such a heck of a time' she meant, of course, every facility for keeping up appearances though the pocket be empty. For, probe beneath the glitter of Vancouver--its gay streets and flowery parks, its thousands of cars and smart clothes--and you will find the core rotten with poverty. Where there is no inward happiness, an outward semblance means everything.

And so Vancouver has pathetically evolved into a city of appearances. It has every conceivable convenience that sophisticated America has been able to send over the border. It is laid out in blocks of houses that, inside, are marvels of hygienic and labour-saving devices, and, outside, are set in shadowy avenues and flower-rimmed lawns. It can boast a park that is certainly the most spacious and delightful recreation ground I have ever seen. Over a thousand acres that park stretches; its fragments of primitive forest, where the great

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Douglas fir still thrives, are threaded with miles of attractive walks and rides ; there are beaver-ponds and fern-smothered streams ; three fine beaches it has, where the woods run down to the sea ; and there are flower gardens where the humming bird shimmers over a riot of bloom. The streets of the city are wide, the tramway service excellent, and the stores model emporiums. If you thirst, you lean your head over a little enamel bowl by the side-walk, twist a nickel wheel, and icy water fountains up into your mouth. If you hunger, there are cafeterias where, picking up your tray as you enter, you can slide it round the counter, choosing your dishes as you go, and march off to your table with as toothsome a feast as ever came out of a kitchen. (And as you depart, two hanging brass bowls, like stoups of holy water, thrust themselves on your attention at the doorway, inviting you to the solace of a toothpick.) Vancouver's children have more playgrounds than they can ever use, where there are so many elaborate devices for their amusement that they never know the joy of concocting

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their own games. There are pillar boxes at every few blocks. When its shops are closed, its drug stores remain open—and there is scarcely a thing they cannot accommodate you with. Vancouver offers you every convenience that respectability can demand, and for nothing a year.

But what must be set against this prodigality, to complete the picture? A society whose average mentality I can best describe by quoting from the American Council of National Research (for Vancouver, staunchly as it would like to deny it, is completely Americanized): ‘The mentality of the average male adult is about equal to that of the boy of eleven; of the mentality of the average female adult we are not so hopeful. . . .’ A moral bankruptcy that can perhaps be most clearly illustrated by a glance at the pictures shown in its dozens of cinemas. And an æsthetic awareness so poverty-stricken that in a city of over two hundred thousand souls there is not a single theatre given over to the performance of legitimate drama, nor a picture-gallery.

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It was Matthew Arnold who said, all those years ago now, that these inhabitants of the New World were 'an unredeemed and irredeemable mediocrity'. The description has not been bettered, and it holds just as well to-day as when it was uttered. Walking the streets you do not meet a single person whose features declare a vital personality. In whatever stratum of society you move, in the Americanized cities like Vancouver, the same vacuity meets you at every turn. For these are a people without a heritage : they have all sold their birthright.

Look, again, at their cinemas. During five weeks I only saw one good picture being shown at all the hundreds of picture-houses I came upon. That was *The Big Parade* ; and the pacifist point that Laurence Stallings had so valiantly tried to make in it seemed utterly to escape everyone's attention. For the rest there was nothing but overstressed and nauseatingly sentimental American trash : a circumstance due to the complete monopoly of American trusts in these towns. Yet the level is as the demand. In one picture-house

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a film of the Rifi rising was on show ; there came views of the devastated towns, strewn with the dusty litter of broken bodies and all the cruel aftermath of war : said the woman next me, to her companion, ' I *do* think it's a shame to destroy all those old-world places, for we've nothing nowadays to compare with them. . . . ' Then, too, there is nowhere else but the cinema at which you can hear music ; the band that plays between the pictures provides the only concerts these towns ever hear, and that is usually at the level of jazz. It is a favourite custom with these people to invite you to the pictures. So was I invited, once, to *Brown of Harvard's*. In an interval the band loudly syncopated. I caught sight of my hostess leaning towards me, in front of her husband. Anticipating her thoughts, I leaned forward too. ' Isn't it divine ? ' she said ; and her words coincided with mine, ' Isn't it trash ? '

Their music, in fact, is pathetic. In the parks one can hear nothing but selections ; and usually, since this is a Paradise of Scotchmen,



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northern airs at that. In the restaurants Victrolas shrill out the latest American tunes. At the time I am writing of, Irving Berlin's *Always* was the favourite. It threaded the life of those Pacific towns like a leitmotiv. You could not escape it anywhere. In the streets every one was whistling it ; from every house of Eats a slithery saxophone wailed it at you ; and wherever there was a piano it would sound all the day. The glucose sentiments of Mr. Berlin, as he publicly announced his undying affection for his newly-wedded wife, were on every one's lips. I do not deny the appeal of the song : it hits you clean in the solar-plexus, and you will probably be lying if you deny it. And in a place like Vancouver, where there is no other music to be heard, the thing haunts you to distraction ; it evokes smothered sentimentalities in you ; it is literally in the air, a vibrant part of the very being of the place and people. . . . You will perhaps be tempted to say, in extenuation of these people, that they are still young, the world's children ! But even children know a good tune when

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they hear one. They are, moreover, truly, if platitudinously, the heirs of all the ages ; but these are a people who have foregone their heritage, and carried into a realm of adult responsibility only the perversity of children. . . .

In their outcast state they are certainly one with their American brothers and sisters over the border. Yet, should you suggest to anyone of them that they were Americanized, they would all furiously deny it. The thought is anathema to them. And that is the irony of the Canadian's position to-day. Not only is American habit and thought and dress foisted willy-nilly upon him, but America is financing him too. He looks to England with a patriotism that is pitiable, since it is so futile ; and England, whilst claiming that patriotic affection as her due, sends her money elsewhere. What she does send, and prodigally, is men. But of what use are men where there is no money to back them up ? So America steps in and supplies the need in good solid dollars. And, inevitably, who pays the piper has a

right to call the tune. (Hence, perhaps, the predominance of jazz in Canada to-day!) Which is exactly what America is doing to-day; and smiling all the while, be sure, that John Bull should be so generous in supplying the men.

How typically American, for instance, was Mrs. O'Flynn. Suggest to her that there was a hint of the American about her, and she would flare up immediately in fierce denial. Her patriotism was furious, almost to jingoism. Yet unconsciously she was being moulded every day by forces over in the States. Everything she wore took its pattern from there; everything she read (except the *News of the World*, which is every Canadian's link with the homeland) was printed in the States; every bit of music she gushed over came from New York; even her code of morals was founded on Rotarianism—or worse. It would have shocked her to hear of any man bathing without a skirt; yet I have seen her tipsy with laughter over the innuendoes of some American film whose humour depended on the awkward moments

of a girl masquerading as King in Ruritania. She was indignant at the behaviour of the tenants of a neighbouring bungalow ; yet she said to me once, ' When Doug and I went over to the Old Country, during the war, we travelled on a troopship crammed with American officers ; but, Doug being with me, *I* didn't get much of a kick out of it.' That was her true aim in life, to get a hell of a kick out of everything, to have lots of fun ! The only difference between Mrs. O'Flynn and her American sister was that one was poor and the other rich ; in their superficiality they were essentially the same.

For think of that American dame I ran upon in Montreal. I was in the Art Gallery in Sherbrooke. After four months that had been about as barren of æsthetic pleasure as could well be, I found myself before a Botticelli Madonna--a lovely peasant girl, bundling the Holy Child to her breast, prematurely wise, and a little sad in her fondling face--and Rembrandt's sepia-wash of the *Death of a Patriarch*. I was talking with the Secretary. A stout

American woman and her friend came hurrying up. 'Say,' she asked, 'could you tell us the most expensive picture in this room? . . . And in the whole gallery? . . . Fancy that, now; and what did the gallery cost, might I ask?' And with that she went out—to glean some more culture as the opportunity offered.

No wonder there was not a theatre in Vancouver, nor a picture-gallery west of Ottawa, nor any music in all the land! And if it be true that to have no music in you is to be unworthy of another's trust, then these Americanized Canadians ought to be unusually suspicious of each other. And that, moreover, is what one finds. The sole standard by which they assess each other and you is: Can you bluff? If you cannot bluff, then you belong to a world they do not countenance, do not even understand; and they are therefore suspicious of you. Bluff is the corner-stone of their conduct. As true sons of the New World it is a necessary part of their make-up never to appear *not* to know. For that, in

their eyes, would be a confession of inferiority. It is difficult even to obtain a true direction from a stranger whom you may accost in the street. Ask him the way and, looking you clean in the eyes, he will say : ‘ Why, yep, eight blocks down here, then cast another eight.’ With a trustfulness that a little longer sojourn in the land would cure you of, you carry out his directions : only to find, after two miles in the heat, that your objective lies at the other end of the town.

This inability to exercise any imagination is at the root of a good deal that one objects to in these sons and daughters of the New World. It saps any incentive to art that they might have ; it makes them boast a ‘ matter-of-factness ’ that is a weakness rather than a strength ; and it tends to turn their religion into a shrieking comedy of good and evil.

‘ On Columbus Day, 1923,’ so ran the report of a divorce case I read, ‘ I was cooking bacon and eggs, when my husband said to me, “ If you have proper faith, nothing can hurt you.” He then took a spoonful of

hot bacon grease from the pan and poured it on the back of my hand. He is a Christian Scientist. . . .'

Crude in the degree of sophistication that colours their everyday life and their art, these men and women are crude also in their religion. Their churches would be empty if the services were not pepped up to the point of incongruity. So placards shout above the church-doors, 'Where will YOU hide on the Day of Judgment?' and electric signs scatter the information over Main Street that 'Jesus saves!' And think of those Holy Rollers in Winnipeg. Having unearthed some preposterous legend that Christ once rolled in abasement in the Temple, this sect has made the fact the focus of their ritual: a comical roll up to the altar is one of the rites that this humourless people is compelled to obey.

I remember my Vancouver landlady again. By every natural decree she was designed to take her part in some little chapel way back in Wales. Had she come any nearer grace because instead, she spent her days in a futile search for

‘poise’? The Englishman is usually so silent about his religious convictions that it would be easy to accuse him of having no convictions at all. And I used to think it must be a sign of a vast improvement in a people when you could not pay your very taximan his fare until you had first been detained in a considerable fabulation with him about the cosmic scheme of things. I think differently now. It is a very common experience out West to pass two labourers discussing Christ as they go. Yet since I have talked and lived with those people I must confess I think it would be a surer sign of spiritual sanity in them were they as reticent about such things as the English peasants are: for the one talks his religion, whilst the other lives it. I am forced to think that the Sabbath peace of an English village, punctuated by the drowsy pealing of bells from a church that but few attend, rich with a ‘four o’clock feeling’ when the cows come in, and enlivened with a chatty hour in the inn at night, is a far more essential token of grace than any Western town of palmists and astrologers, New Thought and



Holy Rollers, bell-less churches and scintillating signs can show.

. . . But, indeed, everything has to be emphasized out there, or no one would notice it. You would get no one to attend your church if you didn't put some punch into your services. And you would get no one to buy your wares if you did not shout them into jaded ears. 'Nearly two thousand years ago there was born in far-away Nazareth a certain man called Jesus. There are some who hold that He was the greatest gift the world has ever known. . . . You will find gifts of all kinds and prices at --- Stores, in 35th Street. . . .'

It is this over-emphasis that is the secret of the success of the one 'poet' the New World reads: Mr. Edgar A. Guest. His daily poems, appropriately decked with some homely moral, are syndicated all over the continent, to be the delight of millions when they open their morning newspaper. He is the modernized version of Mrs. Ella Wheeler Wilcox; and his verses are as near as ninety-nine per cent.

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of the people ever get to the art of poetry. There is no nonsense about Mr. Guest : he is enjoyed because he is so beautifully ' male '. The same evangelical work for art is accomplished by Dr. Frank Crane, save that he eschews metre, preferring the humble rhetoric of the sermon in a paragraph. Is it any wonder that I could only find one bookshop in all Vancouver with any pretence at a display of poetry, and that even there the poetry lay unbought upon the shelves, whilst the piles of sex- and physical-culture books daily diminished ? Is it any wonder that, outside Bliss Carman, Canada has never produced a poet worthy the name and, outside Charles Roberts, not a prose-writer who even knows what prose means ? Yet it is not that these Canadians have produced no art that troubles me. I did not go out there ever expecting to find a ready-made culture. But I did hope to find a people practising the art of living. For better than the best poem (I pass this platitude on to Mr. Guest) is the rhythmic life. Well, that, you will say, is something to expect, maybe, in the

country-side ; but in the towns, what would you ? In Canada, however, town and country alike suffer this lack. Wherever the railway has penetrated, these thin sophistications are to be found : the same newspaper morals, the same false prophets of religion, the same abdominal music, the same lack of imagination, Picture the be vies of girls, shingled and painted, lipsticks in their compacts and sex in their brains, who make every prairie station a mannequin parade ; and the farmers and their wives who motor in ten and twenty miles from their ranches to see Elinor Glyn's latest melodrama.

For what a sea-change these folk have suffered in leaving the Old Country ! . . . In a restaurant in Montreal I watched a tiny drama that well illustrated the difference. At one of the tables sat an old man (who clearly was on a visit to his colonized children), his Canadian daughter and her husband. And there was more than the Atlantic Ocean now between that old man and his daughter. In his ill-fitting Sunday suit, eating his gravy with a knife, or fumbling with his sundæ, he was far from being

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at ease ; but see his emancipated daughter, learned in the lore of hot dogs, waffles and honey, powdering her cheeks between the courses ! And with what twinges of shame she watches her old father grope in his great nickel-clasped purse ! And how his son-in-law, nicely shielding his own toothpick behind a discreet hand, glares when the old man marches out of the restaurant with his toothpick sticking from his shrunken lips ! Yet there will be something fine in the simplicity with which, back once more at his Dorset inn, he enlivens the company with tales of the extraordinary things he has seen ; and as for his daughter, she will soon forget the ignominy she has endured from his visit, and be goading her husband on to accumulate a few more thousand dollars.

. . . And these people call themselves democrats ! They are potential capitalists, all of them. Money is the only badge they recognize. Every one, no matter who he be, has the accumulation of money as his aim ; and when they have accumulated that (no

matter what they may have lost in the process) they have 'made good'. This is how the laundryman put the matter, calling one day for the wash: 'Look at me, for instance. I wouldn't go back to the Old Country now for anything. I came out here in 1912, and of course I had to rough it—every one does. I tried everything, almost. And now I run this, and another little car, picking up laundry. 'Tisn't much of a job, but then a man can't be thinking of what he'd *like* to do. Besides, there's kids to be kept now. Well, I've made a little, I've the neatest bungalow of my own that you ever saw, and these two cars. Back in England I reckon I'd be behind the plough. Give me this any day. For you've *got* to have money to-day, can't get on without it; and if you stop to think *how* you get it, why, someone else will snap it up while you're thinking. . . .' So freedom, in Canada, amounts to this: you are free to become, by whatever device you can contrive, a capitalist; you are free, because you can call your boss Tom, Dick, or Harry; you are free, because no law steps in to prevent your

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little games of bluff ; you are free, because you can own your own Ford (without having paid for it), write in your own cheque-book, and call no man sir. You are a democrat, so what else matters !

## Chapter VII

### THE HOLLOW HILLS

ON a morning in June, six of us set out from Lake Louise, with a horse apiece, and Roany bringing up the rear with an extra pack. In the packs, all told, we had enough food for two months. We were going out into the mountains, and were the first of the season to make the trail. We had gauged that, with average luck, we ought to be able to ford the worst creeks before they became too swollen from the melting snows.

Over the railroad track we passed to where, in a stubby wood beyond, the trail began. Nick, an outfitter's cowboy from Lake Louise, was there to give us a professional send-off. He turned his flashy mare about, bade us farewell, and then enigmatically added, 'See you again inside a month!'—a remark prompted, I now believe, by his previous acquaintance with our guide.

My own acquaintance with Taylor dated no more than a few weeks back. I had met him

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down the coast. I knew that he had been a guide in the Rocky Mountains of Canada. That had seemed good enough guarantee for me when, with a fine generosity, he offered to take me with him, for an absurdly minimum fee, on a trip he was making into the Rocky Mountain Park. I made no further inquiries, none seemed necessary. Gladly I accepted and, with a friend who was also to be of the outfit, set about making the required arrangements with regard to clothing, etc.

It seemed to offer exactly the one thing I desired. If I was more than a little disillusioned with Canada as the boosted Paradise for immigrants, up in the mountains I would see another Canada, free of the taint that man had given her, virgin indeed. Moreover, as I already knew from past experience, there is nothing like mountains for lending a proper perspective: might it not be possible, then, that up there I would see more clearly the root causes of my dissatisfaction?

Taylor was a sensitive man: that much at least I had learned during my acquaintance



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with him down coast. That he, of all people, with his adventurous past, should now keep a book-shop in a town was not so topsy-turvy an arrangement as perhaps it sounds : most colonists run through a multitude of occupations before their days are out. All his youth and early manhood Taylor had lived in the mountains, a trapper by winter, a guide by summer ; and then he became a prosperous outfitter, owning one of the best outfits in the Canadian Rockies, and much sought after as a guide. Suddenly, for reasons I never fathomed, he threw up the whole show, came down to the coast, bought a book-shop and turned tradesman. The contrast was complete.

Yet, so far as I could see, the new rôle fitted him admirably. He was well-read ; for such a Philistine town his shop was a little mine of literary treasures ; and he seemed somehow to have attained a commendable compromise between the commercial and the idealist. Watching him, as he presided over his well-stocked shelves, it was difficult to figure him as a woolly man of the mountains. I accepted the miracle

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of his metamorphosis, however ; and when he told me that, for a season, he intended to revert to type and go into the mountains, I willingly put myself in his care. True, I had sometimes seen him extremely on edge and nervy ; but I could forgive that in any man compelled to submit to the trying ways of customers. (No, they can *not* remember the exact title, but it begins with G, and the author's name is something like Tootle, or maybe Footle !) I thought that the pure air of the mountains, life under the open sky, and a return to the ways he still hankered after, would soon cure all that.

Moreover, I might easily have argued that his sensitiveness would be an asset ; he would be able to grasp my point of view, and possibly would lend some aid to clarifying it ; round the camp-fire at night we would remould the world, in our talk, nearer the heart's desire. The rest of the outfit was to consist of his three sons, all under twenty.

With Taylor for guide, therefore, we set out. We had already used up a good deal of the

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morning in adjusting and readjusting the packs, for we were still unlearned in the lore of the trail: loading, roping, diamond-hitching, and so on. But there was a delight in learning these things; for they are the craft of the forester, evolved through long ages of experiment, result of that patient harmony of hand and eye. The time did not seem, therefore, wasted; and though I could see it grieved the professional outfitter in Taylor to lose so much of the good morning sun, yet with two months of clear freedom ahead what could that matter?

Taylor broke trail. Through the long funnel-neck of cliff that opens at last into the great Bow River valley we trekked all day. I led Casey, and a right good companion I found him. For, man to man, there was little said; indeed, when your fellow-trekkers keep their necessary distances fore and aft, there is little that can be said on the trail; talk is reserved for the camp. And so, save for an occasional yell from the leader—'Look out for moose-droppings there!' or 'All well behind?' or

‘Grizzly trail to the right!’—I took stock of things myself, or cultivated the further acquaintance of Casey.

And, indeed, there is much to see, much to wonder at, on a first day out in the mountains. It is a fresh world, and even the simplest things, that too soon will pass into an accepted order, stimulate then. One didn’t ask for conversation. It was enough if, when Taylor cried “Yo-ho, there!” and we brought the horses up to water, we might stand awhile and compare notes, then journey on alone once more.

All morning, all day, the smell of spruce was warm in the nostrils. It was a little too early yet for many flowers. Yet there was a sense everywhere of earth opening into fertility, as the spring sun fell hot on the hills. I felt already a glad renewing within me as I breathed that intoxicant air. Trekking along by the side of Casey, with the broken boughs snapping under our tread, and the free places all before me, it seemed incredible that Vancouver lay only a few days behind, and the Atlantic itself

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only six or seven weeks. Here was a new world, fresh to my hand : if I could not join in the dance of harmonious life down in the prairies, down by the coast, down in the fruitful valleys, because of the faulty music of those unable men, here we would make a dance of our own, delighting in the simple routine, learning the craft of the camp, enjoying the wonderful hills.

. . . With what pleasure one thrilled, then, to look up at every turn to where the snowy peaks towered against the blue : Mount Hector, like a huge corner of the earth thrust up against the sky, dominating the view all the day ! In such a nearness of peaks, so hemmed in by them, one is overwhelmed by the forces that have been at work to twist and contort and wrench them thus, hurtling the earth into those barbaric shapes, so that water might flow and rivers run and the land be fruitful over all the distant prairies. . . .

For the first few days the journey was easy, the going smooth, the climb gradual. Before we began to dip at last to where, by Lower Bow Lake, our first prolonged camp should

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be made, we were no more than 6,000 feet up. The castellated peaks that surrounded Mount Hector were all behind us now ; and down below stretched the river Bow itself, a sinuous stream (it seemed no more to us at that height) that widened out away to the north in a long blue lake. Somewhere down there we were to pitch camp.

If Taylor had seemed a little testy at times, a little inclined to play the 'sergeant-major' over us, we could hardly resent it : we were still mighty green, and, anyway, the first few days out on trail always go hard with the guide, especially when his party is the first out that season. And was there not the fact, also we reflected, that it must of necessity take Taylor some considerable time to orientate himself anew ?

The descent to the camp was admittedly, then, rather trying. After a number of mistaken side-trackings that led nowhere, we found the trail blazed off to the left from the high ledge whereon we trekked. At a steep gradient we began the descent : most of the way down

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the trail was missing altogether : we could only make a direction and trust to that. Sure-footed as our good beasts were, they were continually barking the packs against the projecting pines, and more than once we were compelled to stop and readjust the loads. Belle, the great grey mare that had come to us so ridiculously cheap (having lost one eye in the war), looked for all the world like a clumsy camel, so towering was her pack, so awkward and precipitous the slope. I used to wonder how, with her vision to the left completely obstructed, she managed to avoid calamity even as dexterously as she did. But Belle was a most sagacious old mare, and a favourite with us all. Had it not been for her tendency (owing to her size) to outstep the rest of the outfit, we would have made her leader. Instead, that honour fell, quite unmerited, to Bill, whilst Belle goaded the party from the rear.

As we came down nearer to the river-level, the ground softened. It was not long before we were knee-deep in oozy muskeg. Soon there was no sign whatever of the trail, and

in the thickness of the trees it was impossible for Taylor to tell in which direction the camp might lie. Somewhere, he knew of old, the marshes gave place to a wide clearing, where-through the river ran and there was good feed for the horses: there we should camp, when we could find it. Tired, we sat on the tumps of drier moss and ling that projected out of the muskeg, while our leader made ever-widening circles about us in an endeavour to rehit the trail. It was nearing sunset, and in the golden light myriads of gnats and mosquitoes danced in whining, twanging be vies.

At last Taylor thought he had found the trail. We rose and made west, doubling a little on our track. The farther we went, the deeper became the muskeg, and before long horses and men were floundering knee-deep in the black squelching slough. We picked our way as best we could, and lugged at the staggering animals. Then through the trees we heard at last the sound of pelting waters: the river was near, and somewhere by its margin ran the trail. Thunderous that river seemed to us then,



as though all the waters of the mountains had been loosed upon this one valley ; but we were soon to have our ears tuned to the hammering of swollen rivers. The trees thinned, and we entered into the clearing where we were to pitch camp.

But rest comes later. When camp is pitched there are other things to do than to ease tired limbs along the moss. Horses must be unpacked, hobbled, and turned out to feed ; someone must throw up the teepee ; and there is the fire to make and food to prepare. But, after the trail, the mere change is enough : one finds somehow a ' second wind ' for those hundred and one occupations ; and, besides, the cheering prospect counts for something ! I have been out on the trail when it seemed my legs could not hold out another yard, but once in camp the pain is almost forgotten in the pleasant activities that follow.

By the time we were all seated round the great blaze of pine logs that had been made on the edge of the clearing, it was already deep twilight. Though the bannock be underdone and the

rest of the food all tinned, there is a fine relish in the meal at such a time ; under the spell of the pure snow-cleansed air an animal zest revives in one that will add a pleasant savour to anything. And when the meal is over, and tongues are unloosed again, how good it is to gather round the fire in the fullness of its blaze, thick impenetrable darkness outside, the cry of animals far off, and the silence of the hidden hills ! Then, no matter how obstreperous the horses have been all day, or how trying the trail, all worries are smoothed at last in that glowing peace.

Sitting round the fire we spoke of the Reds. ' All very well,' said Taylor, ' but we, thank goodness, have climbed to a civilization that has left theirs as far behind as the dodo. When we sit round the camp-fire like this, secure in the very core of the forest (as those Reds were never secure), we are surely enjoying the best of both worlds--theirs and ours ? '

' Not so,' replied my friend Horner, ' we are only enjoying an illusion of both worlds.

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. . . What makes you think we are so much better off than those Reds who sat probably, in this very circle hundreds of years before us? It seems to me that they possessed something—a contact, if you like, with the nature by and in whom they lived—that has left us, by the loss of it, immeasurably the poorer. By the “best of both worlds” I suppose you mean ours of reason and theirs of instinct?’

‘I do’, Taylor responded, and threw another log into the sweet-smelling fire.

‘In other words, rifle against bow and arrow?’

. . . But just that difference implies everything in the world that seems best worth while: to me, anyway. It is the mechanics of industry versus the ritual of craft. And give me the craft, for deep happiness, any day! Besides, what *are* the joys that we can put beside theirs, and thereby prove ourselves so very much the richer?’

‘The arts?’ I ventured.

Horner rose as to a bait. I knew he would. For if ever there was a man possessed of a well of secret happiness, that man was Horner.

And it wasn't love for the arts that fed that well.

'Arts?' he said. 'And what are arts, when all is said, but making the best of a bad job? If you like, the Reds had their art, only it was the art of living. And I for one would give all the Botticellis in the world, all the symphonies, and all the poems, if by doing so I could bring back into my life that "something" which the Reds had and I—thanks to all my reason-loving forbears—have lost!'

'Your arguments' said Taylor 'are musty. Don't you see that the very process of evolution you so deplore is bringing us, gradually but surely, circlewise back again to those things whose loss so irks you? And, moreover, on the journey certain glorious additions have accrued to us. Don't you see that, after the fullest exploitation of the instinct (or, better still, the intuition), as illustrated in the Reds, the next obvious evolutionary step is towards the development of the mind? I share with you your revolt against the state of over-sophistication at which we seem just now to have arrived;

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but the pendulum must first swing to its extreme. Give things time, and we shall reach the mean—with the advantage of having been to the extreme.'

'And then you will be master' I added 'of both rifle and arrow too.'

Horner and I chose to sleep outside the teepee. To wake in the first light of the morning was worth all the shivering discomfort of the night. Long before the heights were touched with the sun, the valley forest would begin to stir; and when those tentative golden fingers stole over the western mountains a pagan delight made one want to sing. One knew for the first time in one's life what the coming of Light really meant: the friendliness of it, the dispelling of fear, the thrust of life into a sleeping world. Pushing back one's improvised sleeping-caps, one saw the rock-roses open and overflow the ground with their gold, the flying squirrels came out and rattled among the pine branches overhead, and down by the river-bed all the forest seemed suddenly to sing. Anything more tantalizing than the choirs of

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mosquitoes that came with the light, antheming round our heads, swelling our exposed faces till the eyes were all but shut, I do not know ; but that punctual matins hymn was worth them, yes ! . . .

For two days we stayed in the camp at Lower Bow Lake, lounging, sun-bathing in the great heat of noon, making the acquaintance of birds and little alpine flowers. Gophers squeaked all day among the hot stones, two huge horned owls sat blinking at us from the ledge of a rock, their heads screwing round as we moved, till it seemed certain they would screw off ; and along the river strand, where the sand-pipers cried, there were tiny heads of cyclamen and blue butterwort deceiving us again and again into the thought that we had found our own English violets. At twilight we would walk far from the camp into the green dark heart of the forest, or by the side of the silver glinting water, sitting watching, waiting still as mice for a glimpse of the deer that stir as soon as the light softens ; but none came—yet awhile.

With the third morning we were up before

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the sun, preparing once more for the trail. There was still very much to learn in the craft of packing ; it had all come back so readily to Taylor that he hardly seemed able to realize the difficulties of tenderfeet, and with hot words and impatient gestures seemed to do his utmost to scare away the willing delight we might have had in learning to match more readily head with eye. By the time the last mare was loaded we were all sick of his voice, with its endless damning and cursing ; already a budding pleasure was wilting into an annoyance would we let it. His sons escaped no more than we did. I used to think how ill the rôle of ' husky man ' sat on him, no matter what he once had been like ; I could not forget the shopman down in the towns, thumbing his wares with pleasure.

But at length we were all ready to break camp. Out of the heather-splashed muskeg we climbed again, to join the thin trail that ran along the ledge of the hills. There the air was already hot and the flowery earth hotter. If there is one flower more characteristic to

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me than any other of the Rocky Mountains as I remember them, it is the Red Indian painter's brush: like gouts of fresh blood it lined the way all that morning, stabbing the green of the undergrowth. Though we were up in the sunlight, still the valley, with its winding river, lay in comparative shadow. . . . Later we broke away from the sight of that valley and descended slowly through ever thicker and thicker forest, within sound of birds once more, and where the squirrels buzzed and fumed in the branches. We had not yet learned to travel with the stealth that deceives the forest animals, allowing us to surprise them as we go along. Indeed, most of the delight I had all the trip, of watching animals as they went about their business, came either when we were in camp or when I was out alone.

How shall I forget, for instance, that sunny noon when I had escaped from every one and was sitting by a small mountain stream, reading! There was no sound but the monotonous roar of the waters, and little movement but the drunken flight of butterflies or the gleam of



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stirring leaves. And the hot sunlight lay caressingly on face and hands and bared chest. I looked up from my book (where, as Jeffries would have said, the sun had put out the fire of words) and there, almost at my feet, a young bear, in his second spring I should guess, stood drinking. The light glossed his soft black coat, he looked sleek. He paused after awhile and looked up, his small eyes bright as beads and glistening. He was looking clean at me, but evidently the wind was blowing my scent in a contrary direction (and, anyway, in the sunlight a bear cannot see too well from his watery little eyes), for he took no notice of me at all. I watched him with delight. I could have stroked him across the water. He went on with his drinking. When he looked up from his task I moved. I had no protection, and I wondered, with the cub so near, whether mother-bear might not be near at hand, too. For a moment he seemed uncertain what I was, and then he turned tail and quietly gallumphed away over the rocks. . . . Slight as such interviews are (and those days in the mountains

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were full of such), they give a thrill that is hard to understand ; for a moment one has known the joy of sinking oneself utterly and losing oneself in an effort to get into touch with an alien life, and some quiet enrichment comes of that self-forgetfulness that is all too seldom experienced in most of us to-day. . . .

Towards evening one day we came upon a sort of miniature small natural park, dotted over the grass with young pines and spruces, with the river running near at hand. Here was good fodder for the horses and a desirable place for camping in. The snowy mountains hemmed it completely in, save for a pass far away to the north. Taylor informed us that way up that pass he and his fellow trapper, twenty years ago, had built a shack. We would go and try to find it. Through the evening twilight of trees we trekked with him over haunts of which every step was urgent for him with memory. And deep in that dark forest we came upon his log-hut, a perfect piece of craftsmanship, cosy against those winter snows. In one corner, under a deftly built

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chimney, was the fireplace, and over against it a bough-built bed for two. Twenty years ago ! And still a frying-pan hung against the mildewy wall, an old porcupine-gnawed book was scattered under the bed, and a tin or two of food-stuffs stood on the window-ledge. We lighted a candle.

Over against the fireplace Taylor stood, the candlelight flickering on his tanned unshaven face. It was easy to throw the mind back all those years.

‘ Between us ’ he said ‘ we worked these two ranges to right and left. This was headquarters. For days together Tom and I would be out on snowshoes, he one way, I the other, trapping what we could. They were hard times out there, as you can guess ; but I wonder if you can guess the pleasure we had of this little shack when once we came in again ? ’

‘ So you confess, do you,’ Horner interpolated, ‘ that the simple pleasures of the Reds are good, eh ? ’

‘ I never said they were not. But please remember I *did* abandon it all, I *did* go down

into the towns at last and buy a book-shop ! Besides, I'm not at all sure, now you put it to me, that I wasn't romanticizing when you interrupted. No, not that quite, either. Man has an uncanny pleasure in looking back over his difficult days, when they have a primitive tang about them like mine. You see, I was even then asserting myself, pitting my forces against other and brutish forces ; and there's something like triumph in the memory of it all. But I don't suppose I ever really liked it for itself. Or why should I have sat here night after night, by this very fireplace, reading up the classics, loving the contact with fine minds ? '

' You are excusing what needs no excuse,' said Horner. ' You had more real joy, I'll warrant, in building that magnificent chimney-piece than you ever knew in selling a book of fine poems ! But, like all sons of sophistication, you think you ought to be ashamed of your sentimentality.'

' No, it was all a phase, and I'm glad I went through it. Like calf-love, it was a necessary part of my evolution ; and the pity is that not

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one in a thousand of us to-day ever gets the chance of experiencing it. It's a means, not an end.'

'Then what made you wish to recapture it all, by coming on this trip?' I asked.

'The eternal itch to enjoy a good thing twice over, I suppose. And nothing more.'

And watching his face, so lit with that recaptured pleasure, I could well believe he had found for the moment that man in him whom life in the western towns had driven out. Which was his real self? The man I had known, fingering with delight his store of books, or the man who came in here aching with healthy fatigue, a clump of pelts over his shoulders? I cannot say. And, watching Taylor through the days that followed, a further question troubled me. For clearly (in spite of all his determined speech in argument) a war was developing in him: the old man against the new, the man of the mountains against the man of the towns. In buying that book-shop he had put off the old man and donned the new; now he was trying to revert to the old man again.

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And the question that bothered me (since the repercussions of 'Taylor's character so closely affected myself) was this: *Can* the new man, the sophisticated man of the towns, be put on again with the readiness that the old man was put off? . . . And, strengthening the claim of the new man in 'Taylor, there was the presence of his sons, refusing him, at every turn, forgetfulness.

We made trail again, and passing under Crow's Foot Glacier, we heard the thunder of falling avalanches of snow. 'The melting season had begun. In fording one creek, so swift was the torrent we were compelled to hold on to the horses' tails. 'The forest thinned and we came out upon Bow Lake itself, bluer than the sky over it, held in the hollow of clustered hills, fed by the great Bow Glacier at its head. Through bog and soft earth we skirted the lake, wading at times in the margin water. For some two miles we rounded the lake, until we came upon a well-built shack and a lady standing before its door!

The lady was the wife of 'Taylor's one-time

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fellow-trapper, now a prosperous outfitter. Together they were taking a primitive holiday here, in the shack he had built, until the season began. Mrs. Marshall was a vigorous woman, and as she stood there clothed in leather jerkin, breeches and cocked hat, she looked no whit out of place in those primitive surroundings; rather, she evidently was enjoying to the utmost this forest-respite from the tourist-ridden Banff where she lived.

We set up our own teepee in the clearing near by. That evening we paid a visit to the shack. For two weeks Mrs. Marshall had been without any audience save her husband, and she talked to us without let. Bear skins and moose skins hung on the walls, and through the wired window we could see the lake filmed with the golden evening light. The mountains (averaging about 10,000 feet) had lost their sharp outlines and hung rosy on the air, unsubstantial as a dream landscape. But the voice of Mrs. Marshall was real enough. Words tumbled chaotically from her mouth. She came of a Scottish dissenting family, and when

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(and that was often) she felt the moral urge of what she was saying her voice would rise to an hysterical crescendo, while her loose hair grew looser with every gesture, and her eyes gleamed like a zealot's.

'I don't care who he is, every man's got to take his opportunities—or go to the wall. That's a law of life, now, isn't it? Take Tom, my husband, for instance. There's deans and bishops and goodness knows what in his pedigree, but that didn't prevent him from taking *his* opportunity. . . . Tom came out here without a penny from anyone; and he could have had an annuity if he'd wanted. And why did he come? Because the wild places were in his blood. In his blood, I say.

'Yes, it's like that; a man may be born in cities and not belong there, and he's a traitor to himself if he doesn't take the opportunity for escape when it comes. And come it will, mark my words. . . . For years Tom lived a no-man's life, but he's got his reward now. You'd be surprised at the folk who come to see us in Banff: millionaires from Chicago



and lords from the Old Country, that Tom has taken out into the mountains. And then, too, they invite us down to their great homes and give us everything of the best. *That's* Tom's reward !'

Yet Tom did not look one who would exploit the Rockies like that, showing them off, and taking his reward in wine and theatres down in the States. Yet I suppose by so doing he was only obeying the same law as Taylor, when he threw up the mountain life for books. One would have thought that such intimate intercourse as Tom had experienced with the wilds would have made the grapes of sophistication to set his teeth on edge ; but evidently he enjoyed them. His pedigree of deans and bishops and goodness knows what could not be ignored, it seemed !

In the morning Tom and his wife cantered away round the edge of the lake, returning to Banff. It was decided we should remain some days in the camp. Certainly the place was lovely enough. One way the clearing opened on to a green valley, threading up to the white

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Bow Pass beyond ; the other way lay the jade-green lake, locked in snowcapped mountains, and dwindling at one point to the foot of a magnificent scowling glacier. Here would be things to do and see all day that could never tire us ; we felt that in such a place much would be accomplished towards some consolidation of those forces that had been marshalled in us during our exile. But the growing war in Taylor, of dual personality, prevented that. At times something seemed to snap in him, as one self fought with the other, bringing him to the verge of a madness that was not of the mind so much as of the spirit.

. . . Take, for example, one sharp episode. Horner and I were down by the lake when Taylor came along and suggested a ' stroll '. It was about ten o'clock, and a stroll implied to us that we should be back fairly soon ; and, anyway, Taylor said no word about taking ice-picks or snow-glasses or rope or food, or even coats. Yet, without our being in the least able to prevent it, that ' stroll ' gradually evolved into a lunatic adventure. Let me describe it.

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The glacier waters pass swirling through a fiendish cañon as they enter the lake. We skirted that cañon, exploring the foot of the glacier as we went. To stand in the centre, looking up into the huge tearing amphitheatre of a glacier where the dull waters crash down in sheer falls, and the ice rises step by step to the snowfields above, is to be in the presence of one of Nature's most fearful organs of destruction, and to know it with every nerve of your body. Yet the feeling I projected into those crashing heights was not one of active antagonism : that was to come later. I rather thought them simply remote, grinding away at some purpose that hardly included me and my like, aloof, brute-alien.

It was near noon, but Taylor suggested we should climb a peak on the left of the glacier and make a first ascent. I say 'suggested', but the suggestion was somehow strangely psychic in its force : neither Horner nor I had power to refuse it even if we had wanted to. Any fool, Taylor had already said, can climb a peak by going round it. But that was not

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his way. Seeing a steep snowy 'chimney' on the face of the mountain he said, 'And that's the way we'll go up.'

Over the first platform of the glacier we clambered, with nothing to aid us as we jumped the crevasses but an unpractised eye. Balancing like bears we crawled up an ascending jut of the ice-earth and reached the foot of the chimney. It looked perilous enough from below, but it looked (and was) far more dangerous when we dared to turn in the climb and look down. By digging out footholds with our unmittened hands we reached half-way; the snow sloped precipitously away from us, almost a sheer drop to the dark ice below. We paused. Taylor must have had something like a qualm too and (for reasons best known to himself) he 'suggested' that now Horner should break trail. Which, tenderfoot as he was, he proceeded to do. Small rocks began to block the way: loose one of them and the lot would come hurtling down, carrying us to the bottom with them. Yet somehow the summit was achieved.

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That was about two o'clock. By a chance I had in my pocket a few dried prunes and these, helped down by a little ice water, we relished to the full. In front and below us lay the great lake ; behind, a far-flung snowfield. We decided that the climb had well rewarded us. (We were no more than 9,000 feet up.) Since to descend the chimney was impossible, we began to think of another way down. But Taylor had another notion buzzing through his brain.

'If only we went across the snowfield as far as that ridge there,' he said, pointing across the blinding white prairie, 'I feel sure we shouldn't regret it. . . .'

By turn Horner and I broke trail, dragging our tired legs like iron out of the snow at every step, and half-shutting our eyes to save them from snow-blindness. Now and then we came upon some crevasse of perhaps a hundred and fifty to two hundred feet. Looking down we could see the deep jade death-trap waiting, waiting—like a device out of one of Poe's fantastic tales ; it would be hung with poles

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of green icicles, roaring in the depths with unseen pounding waters, magnetically lovely as only cruel things of nature can be. Already an antagonism that was almost active seemed to be informing the place, directed against us as if we were puny aliens, resented, unwanted. Knee-deep in the snow we trudged on and on, so exhausted that the effort was rather one of nervous than of physical force. But had not Taylor said we should be rewarded? And when at last we came near the ridge, looking out on another world, as it seemed, of endless barren peaks of white, where the only relief was the gold pools of sunlight and the fantastic purple shadows flung across the snow, I for one would not deny the splendour that awaited us; but who can enjoy with his senses when every nerve in his body is wrung?

When we began to retrace our way it was past five o'clock. We reached the top ridge of the glacier and Taylor said, 'And *now* I'll show you what real crevasses are like! . . .' Anyway, we were completely in his grasp now;

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as guide he alone could see us through and home to camp again. Without a word we followed him. As distance goes I do not suppose it was more than half a mile over that topmost platform of the glacier ; yet, zigzagging our way—for here a crevasse would be utterly unfordable, having no ropes or picks, there a run of melting snow hid we knew not what dangers, and the only way was to go with the ridges of the ice wherever they led—we made a good two miles of it. I have never known anything more dastardly than those crevasses seemed to us in our state, as we leapt across those fathomless shining green pits of death. Since the sun was getting low we were tingling cold in our thin shirts. It was past nine o'clock when at last we skirted the dark lake making for the camp, so tired we could not speak, so nervously exhausted we walked automatically now, so hungry the thought of food was almost revolting.

Taylor had won his end—whatever that strange end may have been. For, unless the motives that guided him at such times as this

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were born of that sinister struggle within him, I cannot fathom them.

We had been out ten hours—ten nerve-racking hours—on half a dozen dried prunes ! But Taylor's sons had prepared a good meal for us that at any other time would have been luxurious. We ate without a word.

The report was that the horses had been uneasy all day, and Taylor sent his sons out to scout for them and bring them into camp. Horner and I rolled ourselves in blankets and fell asleep. . . . Suddenly we were awakened by the calls of far Yo-hos. It was the horses and men returning. They clattered past into the clearing, clanking their hobbles as they came. And then, upon that almost whitely lit night, broke such a torrent of blasphemy as I should have thought anyone in Taylor's tired state to have been incapable of uttering. The forest rang with it. Two of the horses were missing. It was useless of the lads to complain that they had already been out since ten (it was then half-past one), or to suggest that since probably nothing more than a maraud-



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ing bear had disturbed them they would be found in the morning ; the fiend was in Taylor and, like one mad, he tore across the night with his shouting.

As I turned to sleep again, I heard Horner sigh. Was he too wondering how, for the rest of two months, we should endure the company of a madman ?

## Chapter VIII

### WHEN THE PIPER PLAYS

WE heard a good deal, these days, about 'the great white trail, where a man's a man! . . .' But I am afraid we did not take Taylor's rhetorical gibes very seriously. He was becoming completely enigmatical to us. And, anyway, if 'the great white trail' meant climbing dangerous chimneys without pick or rope, flying over the open hells of crevasses, and making first ascents on half a dozen prunes, then it was not what we were after.

The events of the next day decided our course. Immediately after breakfast we were 'detailed', Horner and I to go back along the trail in search of two missing horses—Bill and the troublesome untamed mare we had picked up way back in Lake Louise.

We packed a little grub and set out. Under the shadow of the Crow's Foot Glacier we discovered Bill, quietly munching on the hill-side. But Betsey was nowhere to be seen. So, alternately riding, bare-back, we continued

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the trek, following the unshod hoof-marks. In the soft earth we could see the fresh track of a bear: evidently Taylor's sons had been right in surmising what had scattered the horses. All morning we traced the mare's hoof-marks, but there was no sign of the mare herself. By two o'clock I decided we had come far enough. But Horner was not satisfied. We paused by the margin of a swollen creek that, loaded with the morning's melted snow, bellowed through its cutting like a stampede of cattle. At the edge of the water Betsey's prints ended. Had she crossed, and was by now well on her way back to Lake Louise? Nothing would satisfy Horner, however, but that he should ford the creek and investigate a little on the other side.

We sat down to a meal of bannock and fruit. Then, holding on to Bill, I watched Horner attempt the crossing. The force of that torrent was not to be guessed even from the bellowing it made, and I am sure Horner (like myself) was still stiff and aching from yesterday's mad escapade. The waters beat up round his

thighs. Like pawing horses they seemed intent on getting him down. Half-way over he stumbled and fell. There was nothing I could do but watch with sickening dread. Somehow he buoyed himself up against a rock, regained his balance, and continued the crossing. He disappeared among the pines.

I waited, it seemed for hours. Thinking of Horner's danger when he should attempt to recross, I cursed the mare and Horner's own conscientiousness. The whole valley, glistening with pines in the sunlight, roaring with white waters, seemed menacing, waiting to devour. . . . Then, higher up the creek, I heard Horner shout Yo-ho! He had crossed farther up, round the bend. He had not got the mare.

By then it was late afternoon, and we decided to retrace our steps, or we should not be in camp that night. A thunderstorm broke over the mountains, drenching us through our thin shirts to the skin. With the gathered tiredness and irk of two days we crawled into camp in time for a late evening meal. The joy seemed

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completely to have gone out of the heart of the adventure. We both knew something must be done.

Next morning we consulted together. It seemed unwise to continue with the party. We knew the sons were troubled too, but for them there was no choice in the matter. We were not yet far enough in the mountains to make return alone impossible without a guide. But we had no wish to return yet. We still felt much might accrue to us out of the expedition if only we could break free of the crass idiosyncrasies of Taylor. We approached Taylor himself and put our case before him. We said we would take the hazards, and, if he would agree to splitting the rations in proportion, we would stay on in this lake clearing, camp here, conducting our own explorations from this head-quarters, seeking in our own way to suck out of the forest what it had to give. We realized that, since Taylor was continuing his itinerary, he would want the horses, but we guessed that, when the time came, we could find the trail back by ourselves and trek

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it without horses. Suddenly Taylor agreed, seemed even to understand.

But that evening we saw how the land lay with him. True to the queer twist that now warped his nature, he vented his secret rage upon his sons, cuffing and kicking them, calling on God to damn them everlastingly. What the trouble was about neither Horner nor I could tell. We only watched, with choking impotence, his mad behaviour. But he could not even keep true to that angry point of his compass: hardly was the storm of his temper silenced, when he saw him caress where before he had cuffed, and lead the lads off arm in arm to the margin of the lake. The whole scene was nauseating beyond description, and we wondered those young men did not rise against their father as one.

Instead, in the morning, the party packed and nothing said, we saw them depart up the valley.

So began for Horner and me what promised to be a period of ideal conditions. Under a pine we pitched a small tent, made fresh beds

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of the scented spruce, and set about constructing our new camp. Here indeed was at our hand now such a simple life as we had hoped the forest might give for a time. The hundred and one occupations that camping demands would afford us practice in that best of all crafts : camp-craft. And for the rest we could make excursions out into the woods and mountains when and where we would. The days promised a richness almost beyond our expectation : surely that consolidation we had hoped for would be found at last ! And find it we did, but in how different a way from our expectations !

Now begin some of those best encounters with wild life that are amongst the happiest of my memories of the Rockies. At the fringe of the clearing there would be at first a light rustle of leaves, and then, one after one, the wild deer would come peeping and prying. Until we were safe in the tent, abed, they would keep round the edges of the camp ; and then they would come up to the fire, nosing round, and all night we would hear them pitter-patter-

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ing over the ground outside. They were like the grey ghosts of the forest, never coming out till sunset, never materializing even then to more than pattering shadows in the twilight. . . . But now that we were alone, we felt that we might expect a closer contact soon. And it was not long before they began to come into camp earlier in the evening, ever less and less timid, more and more real. But it was with the salt-lick that we finally won them over to complete friendliness. Once they had discovered that, they were our friends for ever.

Besides, those gentlest and most gracious of all earth's creatures are also tremendously curious at heart: they simply cannot resist prying. In the Rocky Mountain Park itself, no shooting is allowed, and the deer, unused to the menace of the gun, seem to view men as strange but on the whole friendly other animals, who have a queer habit of leaving scraps of tasty food about when they depart.

When they became more used to us, therefore, they felt they might exercise their curiosity



to its full. And sometimes they would alternate their search for food with little bouts of play, as though food, after all, were only a secondary consideration with such airy, lovely creatures. After a few minutes of prowling round the environs of the camp for food, they would begin their pranks: running, leaping, playing in the green clearing, like so many happy children. They would vault the fallen trees like puffs of thistledown, head playfully at each other, and fly in excited circles with their eyes gleaming. But we noticed that the bucks never joined in these gambols of the (for most part) yearling does. They, lordly creatures, would stand watchfully by, with eyes so mildly tolerant they seemed to say, 'Well, I suppose it's natural; but, really, they do seem extraordinarily flippant to-night! . . .'

Then, too, there were the flowers. In the Rockies, spring, summer and autumn are all bunched together into four short months, with the result that out of the fecund earth innumerable flowers will rise almost in a night's growth. For the most part they are short-stemmed,

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clinging to the ground, but there are tall columbines of every hue, fleets of white orchises in the muskeg, and the far-glowing painter's brush. Mock heathers there were, rock-roses that made the clearing like a cloth of gold, blue butter-wort, robin's planting, lilies, anomones, and the odorous prairie-rose that grows no higher than your finger, but fills all the air about with a swooning perfume. But none of them is more prominent, more abiding and typical in the memory, than the Red Indian painter's brush: everywhere it springs up, throwing its bunched scarlet leaves into the sunlight, shining through the leaves far away. Once, when I had gone on some slight expedition up the hills, I came upon a wide clearing, almost on timber-line, and it was yellowed over with the adder's tongue lily, chill as frozen sunlight, fragrant as the first of the morning.

Of birds the forest had not many to show. Our most constant companion, those days, was the good old whisky jack that whistled and screamed in the pine boughs. He was alarum, scavenger, and roguish playmate in

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one. Yet for all his constancy, his harsh note was hardly pleasant. How different were the blue-birds that, in the valley, glinted to and fro, too busy all the while to sing, looking like other flowers that had somehow taken wing that they might colour the upper air! And as the flowers multiplied, so did the humming-birds. Over the honeyed blossoms they would hover, hardly seeming to move, so tiny were the vibrations of their wings (if wings they can be called that are but one small feather and a trimming of down). Into each waiting flower they would thrust that long beak of theirs—long as the joint of a man's finger—poising a frail body in the air, too minute to be framed, one might have supposed, of bones, far smaller than our wren, and coated with gleaming colours shot through like silk. Much spirit as all birds are, these were more spirit than any bird I had seen; as they hung over the bright heads of the flowers, they looked like some elfin inhabitants there, escaped for a moment from their lovely prison to enjoy the sunny air.

Such then was the tiny drama and circum-

stance among which with delight we now moved. One day, when we had climbed a small peak and were treading its unruffled snow, under the shelter of a projecting rock we found a dead mountain lamb. It was almost embryonic, small, and perfect. Had one of those great shaggy mountain sheep, frightened as it crossed with the herd this upper waste of snow, dropped its young here, stillborn? The frozen air had preserved it intact, how long one could not tell. But looking at that little shell, that never had stirred much with life, and then only in the darkness of the womb, one could not but be moved. The great coloured panorama stretched away below, river and lake and green forest; the blue sky hung shining overhead; all around the aching-white expanses of snow. And here, alone on the heights, the carcass of a lamb that had never enjoyed any one of these things! Something of the crass purposelessness of life seemed symbolized there at our feet, that gives and takes away again, neither loving nor hating, but pounding on in one inexorable rhythm.

Yet I must confess there were times too when those wild places seemed as personal in their antagonism, as then they seemed uncaring. Wander alone through the dark core of such forests as surrounded us, and you will know at once what I mean. Lose but for a moment that sense of security your man-will can give, and you will feel dark forces pitted against you for your sure undoing. Nor is this just hypersensitiveness, I think. By over-development the mind has grown attenuated, and we have come to walk in a thin world where the things of the wilds have no trafficking; and then when, unattended by any of the strength that comes of companionship and gregariousness, you walk these lonely places of the earth, with all the heritage of man's cerebralization crowding on you, they seem to rebut you, to be alien, to resent you, to strive actively against you. Is it that, figuratively speaking, we have walked so far from the paths our ancestors walked that when we try to tread them again we find ourselves lost on alien ground, and unwanted?

I have experienced such an emotion most forcibly when I have lost myself in the twilight primitiveness of the forest. One day, for instance, I climbed alone over Bow Pass. Up to the head of the pass the trail was easy going. Beyond, the trail descended through deepening pines, but still with difficulty I could follow it. Somewhere in the green pit of the valley before me lay, I knew, the Wild Fowl Lakes ; and once, from some high clearing, I could spy them through the trees. Goaded by the sight, I trekked on and on. The place grew wilder, the track less defined ; round me crowded the great trees, standing out of a litter of primeval decay ; and the only other sound than that my walking made, as I tramped through the tangle of fallen branches, was that of an occasional bird, an occasional shifting animal. As I went down, the streams increased, and sometimes the trail followed their soggy banks, and sometimes it crossed them at the slant, so that one had to pick it up as best one could on the opposite bank. Then, in one stream, the trail disappeared altogether, nowhere could I find

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it again. The rule of trekking is that, when the trail is lost, one of you must stand still, while the other circles about you in ever widening circles till he hits the trail once more. But I was alone. I could not, in such a tangle, keep a direction; even the peaks that might have guided me were shut from view. For three-quarters of an hour I wandered, hopelessly lost. The trail might suddenly have gone underground for all I could find of it. Then it was, in that futile searching, that I learned the true meaning of 'panic'; for then trees are more than trees, rocks far more than rocks, and every bush indeed a bear! Pan had me completely at his mercy, I could do nothing at all. Was it, I wonder, in a sort of laughing pity for my puny bewilderment, that he guided my feet at last into the trail? Anyway, if my relief at being once more on a man-trod trail (however tenuous and vague) were visible to him, I think he must have smiled to see the completeness of my submission.

And something of the same sense of brute antagonism will descend on one when, in the

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bright stillness of the midnight, there rolls the thunder of falling snow, avalanches crashing down the mountains that are hemming you in. No thunder of the skies is so awe-inspiring as that. . . .

One morning I rose with the sun, that used to come streaming like molten gold down the head of the valley, and was as happy as surely I might ever be. The days had gone by smiling, I had learned much of inward happiness, and there was a sense still of much to learn and much to enjoy. Never had a meal tasted so good as that steaming mush we made, that juicy bacon cooked before the scorching flowers of flames, that good white bannock, and that jam fit to have come from Persia (though it came, in reality, from the disenchanted Okanagan). But breakfast was hardly over when a string of horses and men came cantering round the lake and into our camp : it was the second outfit of the season, Taylor's friend Tom once more, and with some of his wealthy American clients. We shouted a greeting. They dismounted. In the rear cantered Betsey !



Little did we realize, as they heartily returned our greetings, the ill news they unconsciously bore. 'You've got your licence, I suppose?' queried Tom. Now, whether of malice prepense, or whether in the excitement of the moment of departure, I do not know, but Taylor had never said a word to us about the necessity for a licence. All such matters had been entrusted to him when he secured the outfit; and, anyway, he had not said a word about licences being necessary. 'Well, if you haven't,' said Tom, 'I should advise a quick move. Don't let the wardens come across you here, that's all. Lucky I mentioned it; don't know why I did. . . . And of course you'll take the mare? I brought her along, wondering if I'd overtake you anywhere.'

Tom and his outfit were moving again in the morning, and meanwhile Betsey was put to graze with the rest of the horses. As for ourselves we turned to a consideration of our best plan. Should we stop and take the risk? Or would it be more advisable to load Betsey with the remainder of the grub and

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our dunnage and make slowly back towards Lake Louise?

Sitting on the hill-side, where the timber was thin, and painter's brushes and glowing sunflowers coloured the earth all around, we reviewed the situation. It was inconceivable that the hounds of civilization should follow one even into these outposts of the earth. Was there no place to-day where a man could escape and live to himself for a while? I recalled the rage of a friend whom I had met down in Vancouver. He told me, with bitterness, how he had tried every conceivable means of escape to get out of the land. He didn't wish to return to England yet. He had thought he would work his way to the islands of the Pacific. He was strong and able. 'But I find' he said 'that Hawaii is nothing more than a suburb of 'Frisco, and you can't get there unless you're on the quota. As for working my way there, I stormed captains in their cabins, and shipping masters in their offices, and the representatives of all the Pacific travelling companies, and it was always the same--

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if I couldn't show my employment card from the last ship then I couldn't go, no matter how handy I might be, or willing. I tried Fiji, too. But before they would even let me book a ticket I had to secure a credit note for £20! . . . No, you can't go free-lancing round the world to-day: it's all reserved for tourists.'

But it was Horner who really put the matter in its right perspective. 'As I see things,' he said, sitting there on the coloured hill-side, 'there are two selves in all men. The under self and the surface self: or the true self and the artificial self. And it almost seems as if the world to-day is being run for, and by, the artificial self. If you try to obey the true self, you are a nuisance and the world doesn't want you. Either you must agree to fall in with the code of conduct that has been set up by and for the superficial self, or be an outcast. Remember your experiences in the towns over here. Were they not all run solely with regard to the surface selves of men? What else was the bluff you complained of but this very code? Men are trying every day to bury their

true selves as far out of sight as possible ; and if you come along inconveniently reminding them, naturally your company is resented. . . .’

This seemed true enough, from our experience. And I knew, now that he had put the matter thus, that what I had been seeking all along, from the moment my ship steamed out of Southampton until now, was a company of men and women in whom those two selves were at one : a people not afraid to recognize and obey the spiritual compulsion of the true self ; a people in whom the superficial self should be but as a glass through which the true self showed (though darkly) at every turn. Instead, what had I found ? A people in whom those two selves were constantly and completely at war ; a people in whom the superficial self was not a mirror but a concealing mask ; a people going through life as if it were one hideous masquerade. ‘ Lots of fun ! ’ ‘ One hell of a time ! ’ ‘ Getting some kick out of it all ! ’ ‘ I’ll be tickled to death ! ’ And so on. I thought of Château Lake Louise : a gigantic dance-hall for this foul

mimicry. I thought of some of the towns I had visited : Vanity Fairs, every one of them, as hideous as any old Bunyan conceived. And I thought of Taylor ; for was not this, after all, the real explanation of his warring nature ;—that in the mountains, in his earlier years, he had been obedient to his true self, and in the towns mainly obedient to his superficial self, so that when he sought to find his true self again it was clouded over and smutched almost past knowing ?

Looking down the green valley, over the tops of the pines, I pondered the matter still further. It seemed even comical that I should have come thousands of miles in a search that probably would best have been satisfied at my own back door. For, when I remembered it, in whom had I seen those two selves harmoniously disposed ? In whom, indeed, so much as in the simple English peasants from whom I had fled ? There, if anywhere, I knew that the harmony I was seeking lay. With them there is no need for bluff in order that they may ' keep up appearances '. In them, if anywhere,

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hand and mind, through the single light of the eye, work towards one desired end. Unknowingly rich in the heritage of their forefathers, they can afford to be prodigal, not of pence, but of grace. I thought of the numerous instances I knew, back in the Old Country, of quiet men and women, almost inarticulate when it came to words, but speaking every moment of their days through the sure occupation of their hands and the tender mercy of their hearts.

And yet, after all, perhaps it had been necessary for me to come so far to discover this home-truth aright ! Only by contrast with the vulgarity and unspirituality of these sons of the New World had I seen the worth of those sons of the Old. And only by coming out here into this most secret virgin heart of the mountains had I felt the full force of my own alienation. I knew that I had grown sensitive to the point of sentimentality, and nature would have none of me. . . .

We decided we must return. One way the valley looked up towards the pass ; the other

way it opened to the lake. Tom's trail lay over the pass. Most efficiently his stallion rounded up the mares, and one by one they were brought into the camp and loaded. At last all were packed except Betsey and the stallion; and they stood apart, hobnobbing on a patch of grass lit with the gold of rock-roses. We put a halter on Betsey and tied her to a tree, till the outfit should be away.

Tom gave the order to break trail, waved good-bye, and the party meandered in single file up the valley. All except the stallion. With plumed tail and stiffening ears, he came neighing and prancing round. Apparently there was something he couldn't understand. Why should not Betsey go with the rest of the party, as every morning since Lake Louise she had done? And if anyone was to remain behind, why must that one be Betsey---Betsey whom most, at this particular moment, he had set his heart upon? It was strange. . . . We drove him off, and reluctantly, and still neighing his disapproval, he joined the rest of his party. As for Betsey, she strained at the tree, bending

it ; with bright eyes she stared after her lover ; we gave her the salt-lick but she would not be comforted. Clearly, if we stayed here long, we should have trouble with her ; better pack her at once, skirt the lake and camp back behind the next ridge ; perhaps with a mountain or two between, she would find it easier to forget ! She would not take her wild eyes off the valley.

So towards noon, in that fairest of all valleys I know, we struck camp. We had hardly pulled down the tent when the yearling does came into camp. It was as if they knew we were departing, and had already come to clear up the tasty morsels we should leave behind. They took no notice of us as we went about our business, but nosed round everywhere for what they could find. At last we were ready to depart, all cleared up, Betsey loaded. A golden peace lay on the clearing. As we moved out of camp, the last thing we saw was those deer, standing at gaze, slim and most beautifully mottled, bearing their high antlers over them like banners in the sun.



With difficulty we got Betsey round the lake, under the shadow of the pounding glacier. To all the old words of encouragement she was now completely deaf. Every now and then she would turn about, crease up her nostrils and strain for a scent of the stallion ; and then she would go dejectedly forward again. At the foot of the lake we entered the forest, dark after the intense light over the waters. Long before evening, when we had hoped to be at a safe distance, she made it clear she would go no farther. . . . I know how Tom, or Taylor, would have dealt with the situation : with kicks and whips they would have driven out one emotion, and instilled another : love would have fled before fear. But being of softer metal ourselves, we tried other ways ; and from the first I am afraid Betsey realized her brute advantage. Yet if she had hoped that, once we were encamped, she would be set to graze and so given her opportunity to escape, she was mistaken. We tethered her. In revenge she refused to eat ; grass she would not look at, nor even water ;

her oats she simply gobbled into foamy pellets and spewed out upon the ground.

Next day she was no whit better. The tussle between us was rapidly developing into a tussle of wills. We were vitally conscious of that struggle every step of the way. She seemed to delight in getting knee-deep in muskeg ; she forgot her horse-sense and grazed her pack wherever there was the least opportunity ; she would not go forward an inch without being tugged. So we made a forced march of it. There was more than a note of humour about it all, nevertheless it was a little difficult to appreciate it at its full. . . . That evening we came to a torrential creek, by which we camped. Still Betsey would neither eat nor drink, she sweated and quivered in a fever,

Once more, I see now as I look back, that I was projecting my own feelings upon nature, making the sun to gleam harshly upon the spears of the pines, making the water-noises like thunder, making even the mountains glower. Or was it that the battle that was

pending had already charged the air with electric premonitions ? For battle it was clearly becoming. Mad with her unsatisfied love, Betsey strained all her being towards its fulfilment ; and it must have seemed to her that we were just as bent on frustrating it. We hardly slept. The moon was full, showing a restless mare tethered not far from our beds. Near by the torrent snorted and howled.

By four o'clock we were up. We hardly thought of breakfast. And Betsey was equally disinclined ; she only pawed and scattered her oats once more. We tried to pack her. She let us get as far as ' the diamond hitch ', then she bucked and threw the whole lot broadcast. We tried again, and with the same result. Was it the roaring creek, we wondered, that was adding to her excitement ? We watched her as, again and again, she lifted her snout and nosed the fresh morning air for a scent of her stallion. It was useless to try and pack so mad a beast. So we decided to lead her across the creek unloaded, and return ourselves for the packs : perhaps she

would let us load her on the other side where it was quieter.

With difficulty we brought her to the strand. She gave one plunge and was in the water. We pulled at the halter, and she had us sprawling on the ground. Then, almost before we had time to get to our feet, she leapt from the creek and wound herself in and out of the sappling pines. It seemed as if in that minute the primitive forests called to her 'Come!' As if the hills themselves clapped their hands, urging her on. As if the whole of that gleaming valley was on her side. She flung herself into the air. She was filled with seven devils. . . . And the seven devils had the mastery that day, for without a word we cut the halter and let her go! Betsey made straight for the forest; we saw only her uncut tail disappearing into the forest of thickest green. The mountains leaned back in their accustomed calm again, the forest stood aloof, even the creek subdued its voice to a chuckle. Once more Pan had won . . . !

So much for Betsey; but for us remained

the long trail back to Lake Louise. And there was no mare this time to carry our packs. Moreover there was the swollen creek to ford. Clearly we must dump everything we possibly could, taking with us only the barest necessities : enough food, some warm coverings for the night, and our clothes. So by the side of the river there, we spread a gargantuan feast for the animals of the forest : hunks of bacon, a sack of flour, oatmeal, half a side of pork, peas, and I know not what else besides. The rest of our dunnage we packed as conveniently as we could, and loaded ourselves up like two mules.

With the aid of stout poles and by dint of walking diagonally up-stream, we crossed over, with nothing more to complain of than being wet above the thighs. It was still only seven o'clock, and we were on the shadowy side of the valley : that would be a considerable help. Later on we stopped by a stream, rid ourselves of some clothes, and made a meal of milk and salmon. The sun was well up now, and the noonday sun in the Rockies is almost at tropical

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heat. The straps cut across our backs like knives. It seemed ages before we came at last in sight of the river Bow serpentine down in the valley. The sight cheered us. With whatever difficulty, at least we had got no small way on the journey.

Under such conditions, little things assume foolish proportions, and I remember how Horner had fastened a pair of boots to dangle from his pack, where they kicked and prodded him as if, with a comically human persistence, they would not let him lag. But with the sun beating so unmercifully on our backs, our laughter was more hysterical than mirthful. We longed, in that terrific heat, for the shade we had left behind us, so freshened at every step with the hanging dews of the morning. As we trod on through the sweating afternoon, the black earth steamed with fecundity : the small pink prairie-rose flung up so strong a scent at every step that it seemed like the very essence of this teeming earth. Lilies and the painter's brush littered our way, and where the sun lay hottest upon the hill trail clouds of blue

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moths and gay butterflies rose before our dragging feet. Such was the pain, however, of continuing, that these things were rather seen with the inner eye than enjoyed with the senses ; for our senses were numbed almost beyond the experience even of pain. Finally, we came to a favourable camping site, prepared food, and most gladly broke the journey. . . . But we were too cold for much sleep up there, and our backs and limbs ached past any thought of rest.

Nevertheless, we were thus much nearer our destination, and when we broke trail again with the morning we knew that with luck evening ought to see us at Lake Louise. Indeed, we had not enough bannock now to hold on longer, and we had dispensed with the reflectors back by the creek : so we must arrive, if at all possible. On we plodded. The trail was good, we could follow it without any difficulty now : and when noon came, instead of sweltering up on the bare hill-side again, we were down in the kindly shelter of thickening heavy pines. The music of water accompanied us

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all the way and, despite the breaking pain down the back, we contrived to keep something like a helpful rhythm to our steps. By early afternoon we were so exhausted we did not speak, and the load was such that we were compelled to rest every half-hour and less, while we crucified ourselves on the earth.

Then, somewhere ahead, breaking upon the heavy silence, we heard the unmistakable sound of axes. Soon we came upon a gang of trail-blazers, and never were men more welcome to meet! The foreman took us into the tent, gave us tea, and told us (from a copy of the *News of the World*) something of what was happening in the world outside.

There were only six more miles to hold out if we could, and Lake Louise would be won. So, once more, on—rested, but uncomfortably softened. The way smoothed out, but rests had to be taken ever more and more frequently, and then pain itself became mere numbness. Down in the cooling valley we trudged, over the stubbly hillocks, into the funnel-mouth of the Bow Valley once more; and somewhere



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behind the farther cliffs we heard—the clanging bell of the Canadian Pacific Railway ! That ever that siren shriek and hammering bell should be so like a benison !

As we came up to the station, there stood Nick, the outfitter's cowboy. ' So ! ' he said, ' didn't I say I'd be seeing you again inside a month ? And here you are. Come right in ! . . . '

## Chapter IX

### A MESS OF POTTAGE

IT seems to me now, after four months of wandering in Canada, that when I come to examine the root cause of my dissatisfaction, it lay in this : here was a people who, having dared to throw away their old tradition, were not spiritually vitalized enough to create for themselves a new tradition. They had flung away, with foolish daring, the heritage of their fathers, and settled in a virgin land where no hint of that heritage could be found ; and not being rich enough of heart to endure the estrangement, they had thought to hide their essential poverty by importing the tinselled gauds of the crudest culture our present-day world has to show : to wit, America.

For, gradually, Canada is becoming Americanized. Not all the efforts of Empire-propagandists can prevent it. To understand, therefore, what is wrong with Canada to-day needs first some kind of analysis of what is wrong with America. The virus that has

attacked the one is attacking the other no less.

. . . It may very well be that, at this stage of civilization, with all its complexities and subtleties, that men cannot afford to throw overboard their ancestral tradition. It may very well be that it requires men as single of heart and mind and as young as the mediævals were to be able to do that. For to build up a new tradition needs a spirituality that I cannot see we possess to-day. A tradition is born out of a native need : the tradition to which to-day we are heirs is a growth of the soul of our forefathers, nothing less : and to forgo it, and not commit spiritual suicide, seems more than we can do. We are not spiritually vitalized enough.

I think, indeed, that the last Englishmen ever born who were wholly capable of becoming good colonists were the Elizabethans. In them the pulse of life ran high ; they were ripe for mighty accomplishments ; out of their very fullness they might have sown any virgin land with the seeds of a new and virile culture.

They were surely born to be pioneers, as no one since. And it is, perhaps, for us the greatest tragedy of that age that its several attempts at colonization ended either half-heartedly or even disastrously. By delaying the colonization of the New World until the next century, it was left too late. For what happened? A people, nothing so rich in life, nothing so prodigal, crossed the Atlantic, taking in their hands nothing but the Bible. As if the glorious tradition of which they were already the heirs could be carried about the world in one small book! They forgot that the tradition to which they owed so much included a whole galaxy of things not pent within the two covers of a book: lands and houses, gardens and churches, poetry and music.

And when, in the eighteen century, an even more vigorous attempt was made at colonization, the Bible itself was left out of consideration. Those pioneers forgot, in their mad zeal for the inauguration of an Age of Reason out there where no tradition would encumber their efforts, that houses and lands, gardens and churches,

poetry and music, are as much fruits of the spirit as of the mind.

Of all those later pioneers Paine was the outstanding example, almost the epitome. And of him Mr. Lewis Mumford, himself an American has written: 'He summed up the hope in reason and human contrivance which swelled through the eighteenth century. Without love of any particular country, and without that living sense of history which makes one accept the community's past as one accepts the totality of one's own life, he was the vocal immigrant, justifying in his religious and political philosophy the complete break he had made with old ties, affections, allegiances. . . .'

It was those pioneers, of whom then Paine stands as the clear type, who made the New World the empty land it is to-day: *sans* true morality, *sans* æstheticism, *sans* past and (?) *sans* future. If it be put forward, by way of reply, that to pity these sons of the New World their lack of a certain kind of tradition is to forget that with every day and every hour of his life to-day he is helping to build up a new

tradition, the reply is that his efforts are as good as wasted from the very beginning. And why? Because, quite simply, no tradition that ever counted yet was built up on foundations purely economic. Yet that is what the New World, in so far as it is aiming at all at a new tradition, is doing. The superficial evidence, of course, lies in the anxiety that is so constantly to be witnessed to carry over the ocean any links with the past that has been so recklessly forsworn. It is as if, with feverish indecent haste and pockets loaded with dollars, the New World were trying to make amends for Paine and his like! Houses, books, pictures—these America is gradually monopolizing by the sheer buying power of the dollar. But culture is not to be bought. And, ironically enough, to become possessed of those tangible fruits of the past seems more often than not to emphasize in the possessor his pitiable state of exile. I met a man out west, educated and sensitive far beyond the average, and all his spiritual ache to be at rights once more with the world his fathers had forsaken proclaimed itself when

he said : ' Aye, and I've pater's old sofa at home ; think of it—pater's ! ' . . . The same spiritual nostalgia is to be noticed in the average man no less. A Canadian, nurtured in the Home Counties, was one day driving me over the boundary into the States. We had to pass through Westminster, that once had been a garrison-town in British Columbia. Anything more dismal than Westminster a new-comer from the old country could hardly imagine : in its main street it was gloomy as only garrison towns know how to be, dirty, frowsy, and with a dilapidated air that was neither ancient nor modern. Yet there he drew up the car to the side-walk and parked for a moment, while he gazed sentimentally down the dreary road. ' You know,' he said, ' I never can pass through Westminster without pulling up for a moment. Silly of me, but then it does so remind me of the Old Country ! ' Nor need he have been so anxious to excuse his sentiment : it was but a sign that his spirit was trying its hardest to obey its magnet.

If it was Paine, however, who, going out

thus to those empty lands and leaving his bones upon their barren hills, was the epitome of one strong branch of the pioneers, I like to remember that it was Cobbett, sturdy-sensed, true-poled Cobbett, who bore those same bones home to England once again. For this act history has condemned him, as if it were a piece of discreditable folly. But whatever Cobbett's weaknesses were, he was unusually and profoundly right in the gestures he made ; and this was but one of his innumerable gestures by which his spirit spoke in more than words. Gestures are the result of spontaneous acting upon some vivid intuition ; and Cobbett was intensely intuitional, intensely single of mind. Everything he did was either a gesture of words or deeds ; he could not speak in subtleties.

And this is how I see that gesture of his, when he brought back the bones of Paine. He wished not only to reinstate himself before Paine's ghost, which is all that history credits him with : he wished also to reinstate Paine himself. . . . For if Cobbett held one tenet



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more firmly than any other it was that no patriotism mattered that did not include a spiritual allegiance to the motherland, an acknowledgment, that is, to the traditional heritage to which we are heirs. And perhaps he saw Paine, in that moment of contrition, as one who, in so blindly foregoing his past, had been untrue to his own best tenets? Perhaps he saw in Paine, what others have not seen, a patriotism that at its roots was as spiritual as his own, founded like his upon the sense of his proud continuity with his country's past? Cobbett held that any man's heritage from the past was as his precious birthright, which to sell for any mess of pottage whatsoever was spiritually to die. And that being his highest conviction, by what more natural gesture, then, could he atone for his old bitter enmity with the Paine he had not understood than by restoring those bones to the land where they so rightly belonged? And it was also as if, with that one daring gesture, he had denounced the folly of all those men who, like Paine, had proved themselves incapable

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of appreciating and continuing their great heritage.

The finest (as well as some of the poorest) of the things in that heritage date back, with us, to the mediævals. And when, all over the materialized, standardized world of to-day, you find men and women harking back to the single-mindedness (as is called) of the mediævals, they are but responding to the nostalgia in them for those most delectable things of the spirit that once were ours and are now so nearly lost. When you see men and women doing all they know how to do to win again a harmony of hand and eye, mind and spirit, they are but showing how deep is the realization in them of the need for something that has almost passed away from the life of to-day.

In the fly-leaf of a book that I carried with me on my wanderings I had pasted a tiny etching. It represented a little East Anglian town, crazily clustered about the magnificent spire of its church. I never looked at it, out there in that syncopated land, but it put a keener edge to my disappointment with Canada ;

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for it spoke of the things that the New World lacked, and lacked utterly: the very things I had hoped to find.

Let me describe that little town, and all that it now stands for in my mind.

I have called it a town, but to-day it has no more than some sixteen hundred inhabitants. Once it was a prosperous town enough, boasting a charter, running two vigorous industries, crowned with a magnificent church: a nerve-spot of East Anglia. Now only the church remains, noble, still and still alive, with a cluster of quaint houses gathered under its shadow, and an imposing Moot Hall. Yet I never enter that village but the sense of other days comes vividly upon me, alien in many respects and cruel, but in others fairer than anything my own day has to offer. Its church (and especially when it is empty) can make those other days live for me as no history book can; and when the twilight darkens its streets I find it hard to remember this is the day of trade unions, and electric power, and air services, and cinemas.

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Realists have done so much during the last decade to correct our rosy view of mediæval England that we are in danger of holding a too-jaundiced view instead. There is even a hint of sadism, I sometimes think, in the way we are so eager now to hear the worst of those far-off days. Speak of the maypole and the morris dance, and all you get for your pains is something like this : ‘ Yes, but what about the gallows that decorated every hill-top, the delight in burnings, the refuse that ran down the streets, the serfdom, gluttony and bestiality, the “ sport ” and the poverty ? ’

I have no wish to deny these things. But we have their counterparts to-day. And, anyway, it surely is a queer sort of civilization that, after five hundred years, could not add something to the desirability of life or the loveliness of living ! We have gained : we have lost. Only a fool would insist, for instance, that we do not know more in certain respects than ever Christ knew : but, similarly, only a fool would forgo Christianity just because its Founder lived nearly two thousand years ago.

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And so with the dwindled town of which I write. Its present state is sufficient evidence that, even in its flowering time, it must have borne within itself the seeds of decay. Cutlery and weaving were the two industries that flourished there in mediæval times. Then it rang with the music of hammers and looms. To-day, all that remain of the once proud craft of cutlery are one forge, a few outlying relics, and a neighbouring hamlet called Cutlers' Green. And one small loom, up in the parvis of the church (where a few enthusiasts still spend their skill to weave) is the only echo left of the once busy whirr of the shuttles. The town was and is not : it passed to make way for better things. That, for some of us, is enough, but not for me.

I want to know what it was that made those men able (for all the sordidness we are so careful these days to remember of their lives) to throw up that lovely spire twining the blue ; to build that Moot Hall so architecturally harmonious that, all these years after, we still covet the secret of its design ; and to fill every nook and

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cranny in the church with carving that even the crumbling clunch cannot destroy.

And this, as I see it, was the secret of their success : there was gaiety in their labour. In this sense, at least, we need not be so cynical at the thought of ' Merrie England '. For whatever improvements our own century can show, gaiety in work is not one of them. I know very well there was little gaiety for the land-workers. Every day we hear fresh horrors that they endured : how that the serf was almost as much an actual possession of the lord of the manor as any head of cattle ; how that, for leave to marry his daughter, he was compelled to pay his lord blood-money ; how that he might be beaten—with a rod ' an ell and a quarter long and as thick as the spit whereon meat is roasted ' ; how that, when he died, the lord of the manor might claim his best beast, and the parson his second best ; and how that his only appeal to justice was in the hands of those very men whose best interest it was to withhold justice.

Yes, I know all these things existed in

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Mediæval England ; but the country folk had at least the compensation of a simple faith and all the coloured ritual of the fields ; to-day they have not even that.

Yet, true, when I speak of gaiety in labour I am thinking mostly of little towns like the one I have described. Modern research has made it easy for us to picture the working of the industries in those little towns. But, indeed, I do wrong to call them industries at all : they were crafts. And therein lies all the difference between the then and the now. 'Craft', in its pure sense, means 'strength' : he is crafty who is apt, strong and able with his hands. When, for instance, in the fourteenth century, this East Anglian town rang with the music of hammer and loom, crafty indeed were the men who dwelt there.

And the whole secret of their joy was discipline and order. I do not mean only the discipline that comes of organization : I mean spiritual discipline, too. To maintain this discipline (of both kinds, be it noted) the crafts were grouped into guilds, to each craft its

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own guild. Thus into the Cutlers' Guild would be gathered the blacksmiths, grinders, carvers, hafters, sheathers, furbishers, gold-beaters and cutlers : whilst the Weavers' Guild would embrace carders and burlers, fullers, dyers, spinners, and weavers. A person entered his chosen trade at an early age, and underwent a term of seven years' apprenticeship. During that time he lived with the master-craftsman, was obedient to him, taught by him, if necessary chastised by him, and, except the last year or so, receiving no wage. The system thus produced, not only well-skilled workmen, but men craft-proud and imbued with ideas of civic solidarity.

For indeed the standard of morality in matters of trade (at least during the best period of the craft-guilds) was extraordinarily high. For the motto of the guilds was, not 'competition', but 'fellowship.'

And where is the counterpart in life to-day of this fellowship? This high standard of morality in matters of trade? This gaiety in labour? This excellent craftsmanship? Give



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our modern masons the opportunity for self-expression that those fourteenth- and fifteenth-century masons enjoyed, and how many of them could produce such examples of ghoulish caricature or idealized portraiture as this particular church can boast? Is it altogether that they are lesser craftsmen? I do not think so. Rather, I think the system under which they have so long striven has dried up their individual founts of inspiration: it even denies that they possess any originality at all. The mediæval worker was allowed to be both craftsman and artist too: our twentieth-century worker can at best be a good craftsman, and hardly ever that. His soul is denied.

. . . It was, then, partly in the hope that, in a virgin land, where freshening and purifying contact with the soul might have been supposed to cleanse the system from which those pioneers had fled, bringing them once more a freeness of spirit that the Old World denied, that I had set foot in Canada. Instead, I found that, not content with throwing overboard the system itself, they had thrown overboard as well their

mediæval heritage of such things of the spirit as I have mentioned. And there is something in that mediæval heritage that, to deny it, means sure starvation of the spirit. That is what I mean by saying that the mediævally-sensitized Cobbett, in that gesture of bringing back the bones of Paine to their homeland, seemed to be denouncing at the same time the folly of all those pioneers who, fathers of the present New World, had proved themselves incapable both of appreciating and continuing their glorious heritage.

For what has been the result? America, awake at last to a realization of its loss, panic-stricken at the thought of what it has foregone, seeks to make amends by supplying the loss with all the speed it can. The outward and visible signs of this spurned heritage it buys with dollars: with the inward and spiritual grace it pays lecturers to cram it. But a birthright sold for a mess of pottage cannot thus so easily be bought back again.

Not only does America (and the faults of Canada are one with those of the States, since

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from the States to-day it takes its morality, its art, even its dollars) not only does America thus seek to make amends : it is also vehement in its denial, of course, that it was ever in such an outcast state, posing rather as both the Saved and the Saviour of the rest of the world. That is natural. Having lost the way oneself, one sets about at once putting every one else in the right way. To attempt anything less would be in danger of confessing to inferiority complexes ; and these Americanized Canadians do not admit inferiority complexes : if you are so unfortunate as to possess them, you either get out or go under.

Thus Dr. Frank Crane, ' the man with a million friends ', does not blush to write : ' There is only one thing the matter with Europe, one root trouble from which all its evils spring : and the matter is that it has not yet learned to work, and to love work.' (Then praise be, I say, that the Englishman takes other things seriously beside work, and still knows how to enjoy himself !) Thus, too, Walter Hines Page, in 1916, dared to write : ' God

has yet made nothing or nobody equal to the American people ; and I don't think He ever will, or can.' And, lastly, thus it is that an American weekly paper has the temerity to remind its readers (who, so far as I have noticed, were never yet in danger of forgetting the fact) that ' there is only one first-class civilization in the world to-day. It is right here, in the United States of America. Europe is hardly second class, and Asia is about fourth to sixth class. . . . '

And so the picture of that little East Anglian town, with its crazy thatched cottages clinging round the knees of the church, stands for me as a kind of symbol. I carried it in my pack for thousands of miles, only to find in the end that the thing I sought lay best typified there !

Not in the New World are the men and women in whom the best of our mediæval heritage lives on, informing hand and eye in a singleness of purpose, compelling heart and mind to clean spontaneous action. There you will not find the men and women in whom the inevitable two selves sweetly agree until, in

every person, the outer self is a sure reflection, though dwindled and dim, of the inner. Not amongst those past-refusing sons of the pioneers must you look for men and women in whom, from a free contact once more with the soil, the gaiety that comes of true and native craftsmanship is found. The Old World may have grown corrupt enough to drive these things out of the lives of most of her sons ; but those who fled from her refused their opportunity to build up the New World in such a way that these things might once more be the common lot of every man born. Theirs, in Canada, was the virgin land wherein they might once more set up the simple crafts of the country and the town, and, in doing so, most richly live. The past lay behind them as a lesson, that they might reject the worst and cling to the best. But no, perhaps in the very fact that they were pioneers lies the reason for the sad bungle they have made : ' for the pioneer was a stript European, and the colonization of America can, with justice, be called the dispersal of Europe—a movement

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carried on by a people incapable of sharing or continuing its past. . . .’ Or even, one might add, of building for themselves a new tradition that shall not shame the old. . . .

More, it needed those experiences in the Rocky Mountains to bring home to me the degree of my debt to these simple East Anglian folk and their like in the Old World. In my turn, too, I had refused the kindly heritage they offered me ; or, if not exactly refused, then slighted it in deeming it less vital than it was. But when I came to live in the very core of the mountains, among the pounding avalanches and in the black places of the forests, I knew for the first time exactly what patient striving against nature, what slow dominance of the spirit, and what gradual mastery of the mind, had gone long century after century to the making of that holy security of the little East Anglian town I had left those thousands of miles behind me. To become acceptable to those alien places in the mountains I had first to throw overboard all the Christian tradition that is symbolized in that etched spire pricking so

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cleanly into the sky. I had to become a pagan again. . . . For think of the friendly deer that used, night and morning, to come playing in the clearing of our camp. I shall remember especially one sight I had of them. One way, the valley wherein we camped looked up to a pass. I slept that time in the open, facing the pass. With the first light of morning I woke : and there before me, on a golden cloth of rock-roses, stood a deer—between its antlers, not the cross St. Eustace saw, but the pagan fiery globe of the sun ! . . .

*October, 1926*

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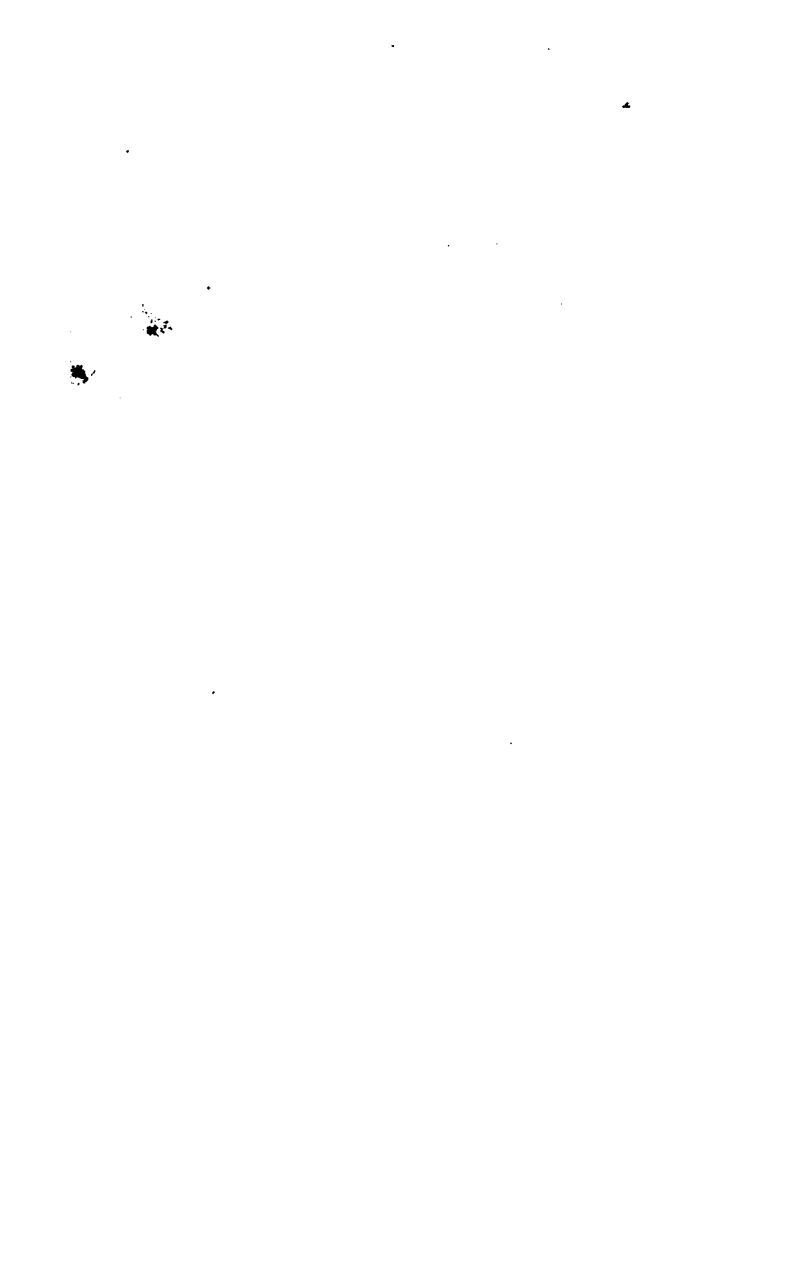














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